

# **ISLAMIC OCCASIONALISM**

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And its Critique by Averroës and Aquinas

**Majid Fakhry**

ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS: ISLAM

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MAJID FAKHRY

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# ISLAMIC OCCASIONALISM

*and its Critique by  
Averroës and Aquinas*



MAJID FAKHRY

M.A., PH.D.

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## PREFACE

The present essay is addressed primarily to the students of medieval philosophy in general, and of Thomism and Islam in particular. It deals with a significant aspect of the contact between Islamic and Latin Scholasticism in the thirteenth century, as illustrated by the Thomist critique of the occasionalism of the Ash'arite theologians (or Mutakallims).

This occasionalism which was transmitted to the Latin Scholastics (and notably St. Thomas Aquinas, d. 1274) by the Jewish philosopher and theologian, Maimonides, d. 1204, is here surveyed from its beginnings and the motives which led to its formulation discussed at length. As far as I know this task has not been undertaken hitherto by either Orientalist or Medievalist scholars, despite its importance for the understanding of the fundamental, theological conflict between Islam and Christianity. In fact it is no exaggeration to say that a number of distinctively Islamic notions such as fatalism, utter resignation to God, the surrender of personal endeavour, belief in the unqualified transcendence of God, etc., cannot be fully understood except in the perspective of the occasionalist world-view here discussed.

I do not think that the controversy in contemporary philosophical and scientific circles over causality will invalidate the basic presuppositions of this essay, especially where, as in Chapter Three, an interpretation of causality in terms of the Aristotelian concept of the Act is attempted. First, because the polemic against causality in these circles is still in progress. And second, because many physicists and Logical Positivists seem to overlook certain essential aspects of the problem which cannot be explained purely experimentally or statistically. It is indeed difficult, as we have argued in expounding Averroës's critique of occasionalism, to see how total scepticism can be averted if we surrender the causal principle and how indeed the validity of scientific observation, in which sense-data are presumably the effects of natural phenomena, can itself be defended.

Originally presented to the Department of Philosophy at Edinburgh University as a Doctorate thesis in 1949, the present essay has undergone considerable revision and modification. The Introduction and historical section, in particular, have been almost entirely rewritten.

I should like to conclude by expressing my indebtedness to the Publications Committee of the American University of Beirut, whose financial assistance has made the publication of this book possible. I would like also to thank Messrs. Allen and Unwin who have kindly consented to undertake its publication.

M. F.

*American University  
of Beirut  
April 1956*

## INTRODUCTION

Occasionalism can be defined as the belief in the exclusive efficacy of God, of whose direct intervention the events of nature are alleged to be the overt manifestation or ‘occasion.’ The Islamic variety of this belief is not without parallel in the general history of philosophy. Perhaps the credit for formulating a systematic statement of this view, which comes very close to the Islamic conception, should be assigned to Malébranche (d. 1715), the great disciple of Descartes, with whose name occasionalism is commonly associated. Malébranche, however, continues a line of speculation initiated by a number of minor Cartesians, notably: L. de La Forge, J. Clauberg (d. 1665), G. de Cordemoy (d. 1685), S. Regis (d. 1707) and Arnold Geulincks (d. 1669), the best known forerunner of Malébranche.

It is generally known that the occasionalism of Malébranche arose out of a desire to resolve the inherent difficulties of the Cartesian dualism of mind and body. But it is not sufficiently realized that his notion of God’s direct role in activity is directly affiliated to St. Augustine and his ‘theology of grace.’ Even a cursory perusal of Malébranche’s major work *Recherche de la Vérité* is sufficient to show the extent of St. Augustine’s influence on his thought. In point of method, perhaps, the Cartesian influence predominates; but the theological inspiration, which determined the shape of his occasionalism, is unmistakably Augustinian. As a matter of fact, Islamic occasionalism, as we are going to see, is inspired by precisely the same Augustinian motive, namely, the vindication of the absolute omnipotence and sovereignty of God and the utter powerlessness of the creature without Him.

Malébranche’s main grievance against the ancient philosophers—and especially Aristotle, who ‘deserves rightly the title of their Prince’—is that in addition to arguing continually about ‘confused, vague, general and indeterminate ideas,’<sup>1</sup> they have, through their notions of substance, nature and power, undermined the faith of the masses in the exclusive efficacy of God. For if we consider

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carefully the notion of the ‘power-to-act,’ argues Malébranche, we find that it represents the notion of something divine.<sup>2</sup> Hence to admit that there exist other agents or causes in nature beside God is to revert to the error of the Pagans who acknowledged other divinities beside God. Similarly to admit that other agents than God can act upon our souls or our bodies is to admit that, like God, they are above us and are consequently worthy of our fear or our love. But as St. Augustine says, we must honour and love God alone (*Soli Deo honor et gloria*).<sup>3</sup> The creatures are powerless to benefit or harm us; consequently ‘it is necessary to maintain clearly . . . against the errors of the ancient philosophers . . . that there is only one true *cause*, because there is only one true God; that the nature or the force of everything is merely the will of God; that all the natural causes are not the real, but merely the *occasional causes*<sup>4</sup> of natural effects.’

In this summary dismissal of natural causes, Malébranche brings out the full acuteness of the occasionalist problem in its direct challenge to the concept of causality. But, unlike many philosophers of Augustinian leanings, Malébranche did not draw all the sceptical conclusions inherent in his repudiation of causality. About four centuries earlier, a more ingenious thinker of the later Middle Ages, William of Ockham (d. 1349), an English Franciscan, had launched a more devastating attack on the category of causality, inspired by the same Augustinian theological motive. This attack, however, rested upon an epistemological groundwork more akin to that of Ockham’s fellow-countryman, David Hume, than that of Malébranche or Descartes.

Ockham argues that our knowledge is confined to the knowledge of the ‘singular,’ as given directly either in experience or in intuition. The concept (*intentio anime*) is a mere ‘symbol’ or ‘sign’ of the thing signified (*signum rei*), which has no existence outside the soul, either in the object or in itself as a separate entity. As a universal it indicates the sum-total of the individuals which can be subsumed under it.<sup>5</sup> But it does not warrant the assertion of any intrinsic correlation between singular entities, either subjectively or objectively. In the former case, because only

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tautological inference is justified; in the latter because the correlation between concepts need not correspond to the objective pattern of reality.<sup>6</sup> Further, such a prospect is ruled out on another ground—namely, that the identity and continuity of the self itself cannot be asserted.<sup>7</sup> All that can be rationally asserted is successive ‘states of consciousness’ only. Thus in the manner of Hume, Ockham destroys the unity and identity of the self and reduces the world of experience to a series of isolated events. For a continuous, coherent and interrelated conception of the universe, he substitutes a discontinuous, discrete and disjointed conception, very similar to the Islamic world-view and to our modern quantum theory.

What becomes of the category of causality in this perspective? —one might ask at this stage. The answer of Ockham is that like all other concepts it represents in the mind a mere ‘symbol’ of a certain sequence of isolated events which is empirically given as mere change or succession. This does not justify, however, the claim that such a sequence is grounded in an internal or organic correlation between these events, least of all that it is a necessary correlation.<sup>8</sup> For such a necessary correlation is not given either in experience or in intuition.

Now this challenge to causality which rests upon an elaborate ‘metaphysics of knowledge’ is obviously more devastating than that of Malébranche. Since despite the theological earnestness with which he pleads and his predilection for ‘clear and distinct ideas,’ Malébranche has not proved his occasionalist case; but has submitted it rather as a pious alternative to the Pagan view. Ockham’s repudiation of causality, however, flows as a logical consequence from his epistemological presuppositions; so that his challenge to this central concept appears decisive and complete. In fact, on the argument of Ockham, causality ought to be surrendered not only in its ‘secondary aspect’ but in its ‘primary aspect’ as well. If the analysis of our concepts does not justify the assertion that an effect flows from its cause necessarily, then the parallel assertion that the world is the effect of the Divine causality is not justified either.<sup>9</sup> Nor is this alleged ‘primary causality’ of

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the Almighty compatible with the assertion of the kindred causality of secondary agents. For if we admit that God is the cause of the universe, mediately or immediately, then the causality of 'secondary agents' becomes forthwith superfluous. If, on the other hand, we admit the causality of 'secondary agents,' then the causality of God in turn becomes superfluous. In fact, 'natural reason' is unable to prove that there are other effects (*effectibile*) as the substrata of divine action than the natural subjects of 'generation and corruption' (*generabilia et corruptibilia*) whose sufficient causes are 'the inferior natural bodies and the heavenly bodies,' and reason cannot prove that there exists any other efficient cause of those agents.<sup>10</sup> Hence the cosmological argument, which seeks to demonstrate the existence of God as First Cause, is without validity; and so are all the alleged arguments: teleological, ontological or other. Yet the existence of God, though indemonstrable, can be accepted on the authority of Faith.<sup>11</sup> Like Kant, Ockham while disputing the right of reason to demonstrate the existence of God, leaves the way open to Faith (*Glaube*) and the will to vindicate this existence as a 'Postulate of Practical Reason.'

The example of Ockham was emulated by another little-known Nominalist, Nicolas d'Autrécourt (d. after 1350), who with greater stringency accepted the implications of Nominalism and consented to bear the whole weight of an agnosticism tempered only by sheer adherence to Faith. In the domain of natural knowledge, argued Nicolas, we can accept with certainty the data of our five senses, our own acts and the principles of identity and contradiction. All these we know through a process of direct '*intuition*'; but we also know *analytically* all those 'evident consequences' in which the consequent is 'identical with the antecedent or with a part denoted by the antecedent.'<sup>12</sup> When we pass, however, to the domain of *synthetic* relations no inference is justifiable. Not even the inference that from the perception of an accident (e.g. white), the existence of a substance in which that accident inheres can be asserted (*albedo est in subiecto—non est evidens ex se nec per experientiam*); since to conceive of an

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accident without a subject in which it inheres does not involve any contradiction.<sup>13</sup> Causality itself belongs to the category of ‘synthetic’ relations of this kind and is accordingly unwarranted. For ‘from anything which exists . . . we cannot infer with certainty that anything else exists’—so that whatever is caused in the universe must be referred directly to God’s agency.<sup>14</sup>

In all these devastating attacks on causality, it will be noticed, the main preoccupation is not sheer scepticism as is the case with Hume, whose analysis of the correlation between successive phenomena, which are alleged to be causally related, culminates in a purely negative account which equates causation with succession or contiguity<sup>15</sup> and thus leaves completely unexplained the phenomena of becoming and change. Throughout the foregoing discussion a certain concession in favour of Faith is made, in the interest of a grandiose ‘theology of grace,’ which dismisses the right of Reason to demonstrate the validity of the causal principle in its primary, if not in its secondary, aspect—while reserving the right of Faith to vindicate the validity of this principle in a positive manner. In its repudiation of causality, the occasionalism of Islam is more akin in its procedure to Malébranche and the Nominalists than to David Hume. Like Malébranche, Ockham and d’Autrécourt, the Muslim scholastics (or Mutakallims) were seeking to show the inability of reason to vindicate the causal nexus and the subsequent necessity of ascribing every event in nature to the direct agency of God. Although the distinction which Ockham draws between Reason and Faith is not retained, it can be shown that the alleged arguments of the Mutakallims to prove that God is the Sole Agent in the universe have a fundamentally religious rather than a rational basis. What originated as an awareness of a purely religious quality was later enunciated as a matter of stringent dialectic, and its validity was accordingly defended by recourse to rational argument. Yet this supposedly rational endeavour, on the part of the Mutakallims, to vindicate the exclusive causality of God, while abrogating the validity of the causal principle itself, could hardly be said to be a consistent one. For if reason is said to be incapable of

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demonstrating the validity of the causal principle in the domain of nature, as they contended, then it is difficult to see how it could be attended with greater success when it passes beyond that domain. Thus the total scepticism of Hume or the partial agnosticism of Ockham appear to be the only two courses open before the conscientious searcher; since if 'secondary causality' is allowed to go, it is not clear how primary causality can be retained on any save the supra-rational grounds of Faith.

It is our aim in the present essay to trace the story of the transmission of Islamic occasionalism to the Latin west, through the intermediary of the Jewish theologian and philosopher Moses Maimonides (d. 1204); and to survey at the same time the historical development of this occasionalism from the beginnings of the ninth century until its final crystallization into a definite orthodox creed. The importance of this survey for the understanding of Islam becomes apparent when it is recalled that by the end of the tenth century the occasionalist metaphysics of atoms and accidents had become enshrined in Islam as a fundamental prerequisite of orthodoxy. This metaphysics, with its discontinuous conception of reality, its notion of 'continuous creation' and its repudiation of the efficacy of the creature in any guise or form, have left an indelible mark upon the soul and mind of Islam throughout its whole subsequent history. Fundamentally, the fatalism of Islam, its surrender of personal endeavour in the interest of total resignation to God, etc., despite their avowed basis in the Koran, received the stamp of authority only after three centuries of speculation culminating in this occasionalist world-scheme, upon which Allah presided as unchallenged sovereign and in which man played the role of a mere marionette which executed blindly and slavishly the decrees of the Almighty Master of the show.

This world-scheme, which begins to take shape by the beginning of the ninth century, was never without a champion in the circles of orthodox Islam. It is indisputable, however, that its greatest exponent was a theologian of the latter part of the eleventh century, al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), a mystic who succeeded

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in reconciling mysticism to orthodoxy by pledging his full support to its occasionalist world-view and dedicating himself to open warfare against the 'Philosophers,' its inveterate foes. His eloquence in repudiating the causal principle and subverting the contentions of the 'Philosophers'—with all the weapons which the study of philosophy and Kalām had supplied him with—is only matched by his intense consciousness of the utter nothingness of creation and the complete powerlessness of man without God. Thus his repudiation of causality and his stripping of the creature of every power or efficacy appears as the natural outcome of this intense mystical experience of God's presence to all things—an experience which leaves no room for the efficacy, nay the existence, of anything save God. Not unnaturally, therefore, al-Ghazālī deserves a special place in the study of Islamic occasionalism, since his attack on the causal principle in *al-Tahāfut* was the acutest and most devastating attack to which this principle was subjected in the course of Islamic history. Having been schooled in the ways of the 'Philosophers,' before his 'conversion' al-Ghazālī was more alive than any of his Ash'arite predecessors to the incompatibility of the Aristotelian world-view, which the Arab philosophers endorsed unqualifiably, with Islamic belief. For this world-view, he maintained, militated radically against two fundamental Islamic tenets: the absolute omnipotence and uniqueness of God and the possibility of His extraordinary and miraculous intervention in the course of events in nature; and that on account of its conception of being as continuous and its belief in the natural efficacy or power of 'substances.' Were we to substitute to this causally determined world-scheme a discontinuous and contingent metaphysics, the omnipotence of God and the possibility of miracles would be vindicated rationally in a conclusive way.

The man who was destined to bear the standard of Aristotelianism against the virulent attacks of al-Ghazālī and his fellow Ash'arites was Averroës (d. 1198), the last of the great Arab Aristotelians. Averroës urges against al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite Mutakallims, that the occasionalist metaphysics of atoms and

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accidents which they developed, far from corroborating their theological claims, militates in the last analysis against their own ends. The logical consequence of this contingent metaphysics is the final repudiation of knowledge, in the natural as well as in the supernatural spheres. For if we strip things of their specific powers, it is not clear how we can still determine their natures and their quiddities. But in so doing we are unable to determine their definitions and their names, and consequently we are unable to differentiate them altogether; so that the natural outcome of this position is the complete dissolution of all things in utter and undifferentiated identity. Thus the repudiation of causality entails the total repudiation of knowledge and with it of reason itself. In the face of such total scepticism it is impossible to see how the knowledge of God and of His relationship to the universe can be rescued. Imperceptibly but surely, al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arites have in this way endangered the reality of God's existence and omnipotence, while seeking to vindicate His sovereignty in the world.

This is not the place for a thorough examination of the Averroist critique of Islamic occasionalism and its sceptical implications. We cannot omit, however, to note at this stage the central inadequacy of the Averroist position. Despite the acuteness of his critique of occasionalism, Averroës fails in fact to perceive the full significance of the problem of miracle, which beset al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arites. This problem Averroës waves aside, as we shall see, as 'philosophically' irrelevant, without however disputing its 'religious' significance. Averroës in fact relaxes into his celebrated position of a twofold science (philosophy and theology) entailing a twofold truth, each valid in its own sphere. The full development of this position is to be found in his tract on the 'Agreement between Philosophy and Theology,' which we will examine later. What Averroës does in this manner is to challenge the very legitimacy of the problem at issue and of its claims for philosophic treatment. In the face of this radical challenge the problem of rationalizing miracle with which al-Ghazālī is wrestling—instead of being settled in a satisfactory

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manner—re-emerges in its entire acuteness. To al-Ghazālī must be assigned the merit of having undertaken to wrestle with it philosophically. It is true that the metaphysical perspective in which he seeks a solution holds out no promise of success. It is true, further, that Averroës' disdainful rejection of this precarious metaphysical edifice upon which al-Ghazālī erects his theological structure is fully legitimate. But Averroës, by evading the real issue, has simply weakened his case. Miracle, as a significant feature of reality, must be accounted for in rational terms or else the completeness of the philosopher's account of reality is inevitably exposed to doubt.

In order to achieve a complete critique of al-Ghazālī's doctrine of causality, therefore, we must proceed a step beyond Averroës. For in rehabilitating causality, Averroës has answered only one half of the problem which besets the philosopher when he reflects upon the course of natural happenings. Before the philosopher there rises, however, a novel problem no less disturbing than the former: this is the problem of the possibility of God's direct intervention in this course of events miraculously and providentially; which from a philosophical point of view raises a whole series of cognate problems:

'Is the admission of the causal efficacy of things compatible with faith in divine sovereignty?'

'How can the uniform process of nature allow for the heterogeneous incursion of the Deity into the domain of reality?'

'And what becomes, finally, of the rational unity of this process once the "irrational" and the extraordinary are allowed to make their surreptitious inroads into its domain?'

The issue out of which this series of acute problems arises is the problem that al-Ghazālī proposes in his attack on the Aristotelian doctrine of causality in *al-Tahāfut*. This can be called the problem of 'rationalizing miracle'; i.e. the metaphysical justification of the supernatural in its incursion into the domain of the real. Whoever in wrestling with this problem contents himself with dismissing it as insoluble or as philosophically irrelevant—like Averroës, betrays himself into the hands of his

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own foes. For he avows thereby his incapacity to give an adequate account of a striking and meaningful aspect of historical reality. Whoever, on the other hand, pushes the enquiry into the very province of reality, and calls into account the actual *fact* of miracle as an historic event, with a view to affirming the fact of miracle or denying it, is seeking to prove too much. He would be, that is to say, shooting beyond the mark. The actual reality of miracle as an historic *fact* falls outside the province of metaphysical enquiry. It is a problem for the historian to resolve, not the metaphysician. The metaphysical rationalization of miracle, it can be said therefore, begins where the historical ascertaining of the fact of miracle, as a unique and extraordinary emergent in the midst of the historical process, ends. The problem with which the metaphysician can legitimately grapple philosophically is a problem which belongs to a different order from the order of authentic historicity. Its formula is as follows:

'Does the miraculous and the extraordinary compromise in any way the rational unity of the natural process? Is there, that is to say, in the whole sphere of natural reality no room for the heterogeneous and the extraordinary?'

That the formulation of the problem in these terms narrows the field of enquiry considerably and determines the direction in which the solution of the apparent conflict between the natural and the miraculous must be sought can be readily conceded. We have to content ourselves at this stage of the argument with submitting as a mere hypothesis the maxim that metaphysical speculation must set out from the given reality of that which is. The most primordial metaphysical postulate is the postulate of the priority of being over everything else. A metaphysics which does not have its roots in Being is a metaphysics of non-being and, therefore, a metaphysics of sheer inanities.

From the standpoint of metaphysics or ontology, al-Ghazālī's occasionalist solution of the problem of miracle like the solution of his Ash'arite predecessors, amounts to an impoverishment of the real, a stripping of the real of the positive predicates of substantiality. The praiseworthiness of his motive in achieving

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this solution must not blind us to the inadequacy of the metaphysical framework in which his thought revolves. Nor must the legitimate rehabilitation of the Aristotelian doctrine of substance as causally operative, blind us, on the other hand, to the inadequacy of Averroës' approach to the problem of miracle, in his attempt to expose the fallacies which occasionalism underlies. If a total synthesis of the problem at issue is to be achieved, the conscientious searcher must do complete justice to the metaphysical and the theological interests involved in the controversy. Such a synthesis must be sought beyond the metaphysical determinism of Averroës and the theological occasionalism of al-Ghāzalī and the Ash‘arites.

It is our purpose in the present essay, once the critical ground has been covered, to formulate a solution of the problem in terms of a metaphysics which admits of the aforesaid synthesis. In this task we are turning to the Thomist system in which, we believe, the respective claims of philosophy and theology, as regards our problem, can be met. Thomas Aquinas, in stripping the Aristotelian metaphysics of its deterministic implications achieves the feat of accommodating it to the theological needs of revealed religion, and thus succeeds in resolving the problem at issue in a satisfactory manner. To vindicate the omnipotence of God, al-Ghāzalī and his fellow Ash‘arites pronounce the cosmic scene a purely fictitious stage upon which is displayed the cosmic might of the Creator. No wonder they reduce every cosmic agent to a mere marionette engaged in the performance of a fictitious role in a world of mere ghosts and shadows. That is why a metaphysics of essential being is found unacceptable to them. It was this de-naturalization of nature, this impoverishment of the world of concrete existence which led Thomas Aquinas, as we shall see at length, to engage in a virulent polemic against the ‘Loquentes’—the spiritual forebears of al-Ghazālī and of his occasionalist metaphysics, in the *Summa contra Gentiles*,<sup>16</sup> in *de Potentia*<sup>17</sup> and in many another place.

Against the occasionalist metaphysics of the Loquentes and

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their consequent thesis of the inertness of being, Thomas Aquinas teaches that the world of nature is subsistent and real in its own right. This subsistent reality of things is not an eternal cycle of cosmic inertia, as Aristotle and his Arab commentators, Avicenna and Averroës, had held; but is rather the gracious bringing forth into being by the Creator of the manifoldness of the real which is generously permitted to develop its life-process in accordance with the laws of its own being. Whenever Thomas Aquinas discusses the problem of free choice, providence, grace, predestination, he insists in emphatic terms that 'it is part of the design of God's providence to allow the operation of secondary causes, in order that the beauty of order may be preserved in the universe . . . and (in order that God) may communicate to creatures the dignity of causality.'<sup>18</sup> For such is God's generosity and God's love that He communicates to His creatures the power for causal efficacy, which in the most pre-eminent sense is the prerogative of the Almighty Himself.

It will be readily perceived at this juncture wherein the Thomist reconciliation of the omnipotence of God and the causality of natural agents is to be sought—a reconciliation with which is bound up the possibility of a complete solution of our problem. The divine omnipotence is not the sole principle of divine action and communication. Upon God's creative act there presides a twofold principle no less significant than the former: this is the principle of divine wisdom and divine love, which marks the limit of divine power without contradicting it.

## NOTES

### INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup> *Recherche de la Vérité*, ed. Paris, 1772, Vol. II, Bk. VI, Ch. 3, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 84. Malébranche quotes here *Aug. L.* 6 Mus. C. 5, and *De quantitate animae*, C. 34. In Preface, Vol. I, pp. xxiv ff., he quotes repeatedly *Aug. in Joan.*, *De Magistro*, *Confess.*, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. J. Maréchal, *Point de départ de la metaphysique*, Paris, 1944, Vol. I, pp. 226–8, p. 230 f., and the citations from *Log.*

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 237.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 234.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 238. Cf. also Gilson, *Phil. au moyen âge*, Paris, 1952, pp. 640 ff.

<sup>9</sup> *Point de départ*, pp. 238 and 240–1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 240–1.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 240 f.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. T. Lappe, *Beiträge zur Geschich. der Phil. des Mittelalters*, Bd. VI, 2, Münster, 1908, p. 8; cf. also Maréchal, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 170.

<sup>13</sup> Maréchal, op. cit., p. 172; Lappe, ibid., pp. 29 and 30.

<sup>14</sup> Maréchal, ibid., p. 171, and *Dic. de Théol. Catholique*, 1931, Vol. II, pp. 566–7. On Nicholas's Theory of Atoms, Vacuum and the Continuum, cf. J. R. Weinberg, *Nic. of Autrécourt*, Princeton, 1948, pp. 149 f., 160 f. and 83 f., where the possible influence of al-Ghazālī and the Mutakallims on Nicholas is discussed.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Treatise* in *Works*, Vols. I and II, Pt. III, sect. 8, p. 141, and sect. 2, pp. 103 ff.

<sup>16</sup> Ch. 69.

<sup>17</sup> Q. III, art. 7.

<sup>18</sup> *Summa Theol.*, Ia, Q. 23, art. 8.

## CHAPTER ONE

# *The Islamic Metaphysics of Atoms and Accidents*

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### I

#### THE REACTION OF ISLAMIC SCHOLASTICISM TO HELLENISM

Like other forms of ‘scholastic theology,’ Islamic scholasticism—designated as Kalām—arose early in the history of Islam as a deliberate attempt to subject the data of revelation to the scrutiny of reason, especially where such data appeared to involve internal contradiction. The main impetus to ‘rationalize’ theology came from Greek philosophy, which was transmitted to the Arabs through the Christian, Syriac medium. The Syriac Christians had, at Antioch, Edessa, and other seats of Hellenic learning, recognized the need to turn to the Greek masters for the deepening of their understanding of some logical concepts underlying theological discussions. As early as the fifth century, Ibas (d. 457), the Nestorian bishop of Edessa, made Syriac versions of Theodore of Mopseustia’s theological works and, as a sort of propaedeutic to its study, he translated the *Isagoge* of Porphyry and the *Hermeneutica* of Aristotle.<sup>1</sup> By the beginning of the eighth century the Arabs were beginning to receive the impact of Greek ideas. Khālid b. Yazīd (d. 704), the Umayyad prince who dabbled in alchemy, is said to have provided for the translation of some works on alchemy, medicine and astrology

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from Greek into Arabic.<sup>2</sup> The impact of Hellenism, however, did not set in in full before the ninth century, which saw the setting up by Ma'mūn (d. 833), an enlightened but doctrinaire caliph, of a very active centre of translation.<sup>3</sup> It is no coincidence that during that period Islamic scholastic theology displayed its utmost vitality; so that the ultimate form and content of theological discussion can be said to have been determined by the bold, and very often original, speculation of the theologians of this period. Under the influence of Hellenism, those theologians were beginning to subject the Koranic concepts of creation, predestination, divine justice and providence, etc., to the scrutiny of Greek dialectic. The Mu'tazila (or at any rate their Qadari forerunners) are generally believed to have initiated serious theological discussion in Islam; probably in emulation of Christian theologians with whom they came in contact at Damascus, Basrah and elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> Whatever the extent of Christian influence on the early Mu'tazilite theologians of Islam, it is certain that they came decisively under the impact of Greek ideas, and it is significant that their Ash'arite opponents taunt them continually with having studied the works of the (Greek) philosophers.<sup>5</sup> We should guard, however, against the illusion that this influence was either uniform or systematic. Despite the fact that from the start the interest of the Syrian translators of the Greek masters centred mainly round Aristotle and his logical works for the reasons we have explained, the early Mu'tazilite doctors who prepared the ground for the later development of Kalām and its occasionalist world-view, showed a greater predilection for the teaching of the pre-Socratics than for that of Aristotle or Plato.<sup>6</sup>

It should not be imagined, nevertheless, that the two great representatives of the Greek genius were completely left out of account. Within the properly philosophical movement in Islam, it was Plato and Aristotle who before long reigned as the two undisputed masters. Perhaps one should say it was a 'Platonized' Aristotle in a Syriac-Alexandrine garb<sup>7</sup> who, though completely at one with his master Plato, it was thought, took the occasional

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liberty of differing from him on some secondary points but could not possibly be said to have seriously departed from him.<sup>8</sup>

One aspect of this ambivalent development in Islam was that there grew in the Islamic learned world two parallel currents: the one fundamentally Hellenic in spirit, the other fundamentally Islamic. Those two currents did intercross at more than one decisive point and this is what gave rise to scholastic theology in Islam. The main debt of theology to Hellenism, however, was one of method or technique rather than of substance or content. And even when the Muslim theologians, as we shall see, gleaned at random those of the ideas of the minor Greek philosophers, which they found suitable for the construction of their world-scheme—they continued to exercise a complete freedom of initiative in their eclectical undertaking. They refused consistently, however, to be accounted followers of Plato and Aristotle. In fact such allegiance as their fellow-Muslim philosophers paid the two sages became before long the stigma of heresy, so that by the end of the eleventh century the conflict between Islam and Aristotelianism was settled in a conclusive manner at the hand of al-Ghazālī, who dealt ‘philosophy’ in his *Tahāfut* its final *coup de grâce*.

Yet the impact of Hellenism on Islamic theology was not without its decisive and far-reaching consequences. The traditionalism of the early theologians and jurists, like Mālik b. Anas (d. 795), even when it was viewed with the utmost deference by the champions of orthodoxy, underwent considerable modification. Ash'arism, which was committed to the defence of orthodoxy, found it impossible to do so without recourse to the weapons which its ‘innovating’ opponents had borrowed directly or indirectly from the Greeks. It was in this manner that scholastic theology, in its orthodox as well as semi-orthodox forms, developed by the middle of the ninth century a distinctive and elaborate metaphysics which we shall refer to as occasionalism.

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### II

#### MAIMONIDES AND HIS ACCOUNT OF KALĀM

The credit for transmitting the teaching of the Mutakallims (or *loquentes in lege Maurorum*) to the Latin west in the thirteenth century belongs to the famous Jewish philosopher and theologian, Musa b. Maimūn (Maimonides) (d. 1204). In his *Guide of the Perplexed*, which was translated into Latin as early as 1220,<sup>9</sup> Maimonides sought to reconcile Mosaic teaching with Aristotelianism in a manner which would safeguard equally the claims of reason and of revelation. His procedure in this attempt at reconciliation was bound to strike the nascent school of Latin Aristotelianism, with Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas at its head. No wonder then that we find Thomas Aquinas invoking the authority of 'Rabbi Moyses' continually, on such questions as the creation of the world in time, the interpretation of scripture, etc.<sup>9a</sup>

It is not, however, with this particular aspect of Aquinas's methodological debt to Maimonides that we are concerned here; but rather with the role which the latter played in providing him with a comprehensive account of the tenets of Kalām which formed the basis of his critique of Islamic occasionalism.<sup>10</sup> In order to determine the accuracy of this account we propose to examine here its salient features so as to be able more readily to determine the extent to which it corresponds to the original Islamic version, as we find it in the extant works of the classical Islamic authors of the tenth and eleventh centuries. We will confine ourselves in this undertaking, however, to those aspects of Kalām which have a direct bearing on the occasionalist metaphysics of the 'Loquentes,' which was the object of Averroës' and Aquinas' critique. Accordingly we will leave out of account a number of questions which are of definite interest in themselves but which are only of incidental relevance to our main theme; such as the ironical manner in which Maimonides dismisses the alleged arguments of the Mutakallims (both Christian and Muslim) purporting to demonstrate the existence of God from

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the beginning of the world in time (*ḥadath*).<sup>11</sup> Such arguments, Maimonides maintains, are completely futile, because the beginning of the world is not a matter which can be settled with complete certainty. In fact, it is a matter over which the philosophers have been at variance with one another for 3,000 years. Thus in claiming that they have proved the thesis of a temporal beginning of the world, the Muslim Mutakallims, like the Christian theologians whom they emulate, make an entirely illusory claim. For their arguments for the beginning of the world rest upon ‘what they imagined to be the nature of being’ rather than upon the actual nature or form of being in itself.<sup>12</sup> It follows that their alleged argument that the world, being created in time (*ḥādīth*), must have a Maker (*Šāni‘*) is baseless. Not only does this argument not advance us a single step towards a positive proof of God’s existence but rather weakens the ground for such a proof. The Mutakallims, Maimonides writes rather ironically, argue in this vein: ‘If the universe is said to have a beginning then there is a God, if it is eternal then there is no God,’<sup>13</sup> making the issue of God’s existence as dubious as that of the world’s beginning.

Maimonides sums up the teachings of the Mutakallims in Chapter 73 of his *Guide* (first part), under twelve propositions of which the first three are concerned with the atomic composition of bodies, the atomic character of time and the existence of the void. These three propositions have this in common: that they rest upon the notion of ‘discontinuous’ being which as will appear from our analysis is the corner-stone of the whole atomic occasionalism of Islam.

In the first proposition he states that, according to the Mutakallims, the universe as a whole consists of indivisible particles which are devoid of magnitude (*kam*), but are completely similar or homogeneous. The combination of several of those particles (or atoms) gives rise to bodies; and this is what they call ‘generation,’ their dissolution to the destruction of bodies, which they call ‘corruption’—although, Maimonides here remarks, the Mutakallims are rather averse to the use of those two Aristotelian

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terms and prefer to speak of the various ‘modi’ (*sing.* Kaun) of being.

This atomic view, Maimonides explains, differs from that of Epicurus and the Atomists of old in that, whereas the latter considered that the atoms were determinate in number, the Mutakallims held that the indivisible particles of bodies were continually created by God, who could create and annihilate them at will. The manner in which God annihilates those atoms, however, raised some difficulties. The majority of the Mutakallims held that the atom cannot endure for two instants of time, like the accidents which inhered in it; so that not-being would belong to it essentially, so to speak, but for God’s decree to preserve it in being for a given time. For it was their view that the atom endures simply through the supervention upon it of the accident of duration (*baqā’*). Now the accident of duration, like the rest of the accidents, cannot endure for two instants (Prop. 6). Thus when God creates an atom in which He creates a certain accident, the latter ceases to exist forthwith; whereupon God creates in the atom another accident of the same species which ceases to exist forthwith also and so on indefinitely so long as He wishes. Consequently if God chose to destroy a body it was sufficient, according to this section of the Mutakallims, that He should cease to create in it the accident of duration (as well as the other accidents proper to it) for it to cease to exist.<sup>14</sup> Another section,<sup>15</sup> on the other hand, held that some accidents were susceptible of duration, whereas others were not. Thus when God wishes to destroy the universe according to them, He creates the accident of extinction (*fānā’*) in no substratum and this leads to the annihilation of the universe as a whole.<sup>16</sup>

With regard to time, the Mutakallims held that it too consisted of atoms or indivisible particles—a view which they inferred, explains Maimonides, from Aristotle’s argument in the *Physics*<sup>17</sup> that space, time and motion are correlative notions and consequently have a certain ‘correspondence to one another.’ For the assertion that a body is composed of indivisible particles entails, according to them, that time is equally composed of atoms,

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corresponding to the bodily atoms.<sup>18</sup> Motion, on the other hand, they described as the translation (*intiqāl*) of each atom of the body from one point in space to the other,<sup>19</sup> and since space (*makān*) according to them was discontinuous like time, they contended that no velocity was greater than another. Thus if two objects traverse two different spaces, one greater and one smaller, in the same time-interval, this does not mean, according to them, that the velocity of one is greater than the velocity of the other; but rather that the ‘motion of the slower object was interrupted by fewer moments of rest.’<sup>20</sup> If, in countering this argument, Maimonides observes, one were to point to the arrow in flight and to the millstone which performs a complete revolution, so that an atom nearer its circumference would have completed the revolution in the same time-interval in which the atom nearer the centre did (and it is self-evident that the velocity of the former is greater than the velocity of the latter)—the Mutakallims would simply retort: ‘The millstone disintegrates during its revolution, despite the evidence of the senses to the contrary, since the senses frequently deceive us.’<sup>21</sup>

As a further corollary of their theory of motion, the Mutakallims affirmed the existence of vacuum. For it is impossible according to them that bodies or atoms should interpenetrate.<sup>22</sup> Now motion which is the necessary condition of the ‘generation and corruption’ of bodies (or in the words of the Mutakallims, the composition and decomposition of atoms), would be impossible unless the existence of vacuum is posited.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps the most characteristic aspect of the occasionalism of the Mutakallims was the theory of accidents which it presupposed. A considerable part (Props. 4–9) of Maimonides’ account of Kalām centres round this theory of accidents. In the Fourth Proposition, he reports that the Mutakallims defined accidents as ‘the notions (*sing.* *ma’na*) superadded to the notion of substance and which accompany the body of necessity.’<sup>24</sup> To this the Mutakallims added the further thesis that a substance cannot be divested of a set of positive or negative accidents; so that an atom, for instance, must be either endowed with the

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accident of life or that of death, that of motion or that of rest, that of composition or its opposite. In some cases, they further argued, the existence of one accident entails a set of auxiliary accidents; for example, life entails knowledge, will, power, etc. or their opposite. 'In fact,' they maintained, 'whatever belongs to the living must inhere in it or its opposite' (Prop. 4). Here Maimonides is referring undoubtedly to a cardinal tenet of Kalām over which raged a long-drawn controversy among the various schools of Kalām, as we shall see in the sequel.

It is further characteristic of the accidents that, when they are predicated of the body, they inhere in every atom of which the body consists rather than in the aggregate; so that whiteness, on this hypothesis, is not a quality proper to the snow which is said to be white but rather to every atom of which it consists. It is not the snow as a whole, that is, which is white but rather every atom thereof. Likewise life is not the predicate of the 'living body' but rather of every atom of the living being in which the accident of life is said to inhere, and so on.<sup>25</sup>

In consonance with their view of time, the Mutakallims held that accidents do not endure for two moments of time (Prop. 6). When God creates an atom, as we have seen, He creates in it a certain accident. However, inasmuch as it 'belongs to the essence of the accident to be perishable'<sup>26</sup> the created accident ceases to exist forthwith, but God creates in the atom another accident of the same species so long as He wishes the particular species of that accident to endure. If, on the other hand, God chose to create a different species of accidents in the atom in question, He would be at liberty to do so. Were He, moreover, to cease creating any accidents in the atom altogether, the atom itself would cease to exist, as we have seen in discussing the Ash'arite view.

Now from this account of the creation and annihilation of accidents, it is clear what is the ultimate motive of the Mutakallims, Maimonides aptly remarks. In this elaborate speculation about atoms and accidents the Mutakallims are simply seeking to prove their grand theological thesis of God's absolute and exclusive efficacy. It is not through their proper natures or 'forms'

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that bodies are said to generate their effects or acquire their proper accidents but through God's decree to create in them any series of accidents or to discontinue it at will.<sup>27</sup> Thus when a white garment is brought into contact with a red dye, the garment is seen to change colour and so we infer that the red pigment has penetrated the garment. This, however, is an entirely unwarranted inference. For, in the first place, an accident is not capable of transmission from one body to another. And, in the second place, it is not necessary that in every case red should ensue upon the application of the red pigment to the garment. What has actually happened, the Mutakallims argue, is that God, who is the true Agent of the pigmentation, causes the accident white to cease upon the application of the red pigment and in its stead creates the accident red in the garment. This accident red itself does not endure, so that God recreates in the garment a similar accident as long as He wishes. However, were He so disposed there would be nothing to prevent Him from creating in it the accident yellow or the accident black. The fact that He does not commonly do so does not imply the impossibility of such a circumstance; but simply that God has decreed as a matter of *habit* ('ādah) that the succession of accidents shall correspond to a certain pattern; so that the colour black, e.g., shall not appear in the garment unless it is brought into contact with a black dye, nor that it shall be followed, upon its instantaneous cessation, by any save the colour black. But it is clear that God who is the ultimate Agent could alter this course of habit freely.

Here we come upon the thesis, which as Maimonides himself observes, marks the coping-stone as it were of the whole metaphysical edifice of the Mutakallims. The preceding speculation concerning atoms and accidents, time and motion, etc., is merely the theoretical framework in which this decisive theological claim is set. For the Mutakallims are not interested in such speculation on its account, but only as a means of vindicating the exclusive prerogative of God to act in the domain of nature directly and imperiously. And this exclusive prerogative is rightly found to leave no scope, not only to the efficacy of inanimate

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things which we call causality, but equally to the efficacy of man himself. For it is clear, on the assumption of the Mutakallims, that the notion of God's prerogative to act as well as the parallel notion of the intransmissibility of accidents, render the notion of human activity entirely unthinkable. When, for instance, a man is said to move a pen such movement, they argue, is not really the result of his willing or action, but rather the result of the direct intervention of God, who creates four successive accidents, simultaneously with the event, leading up to the movement of the pen. The *first* of these accidents is the will to move the pen; the *second* is the power to move it; the *third* is the movement of the hand of the proximate agent, and finally the actual movement of the pen. Those four accidents are not causally related to one another but only concomitantly (*mutaqārinah*).<sup>28</sup> Those of the Mutakallims (viz. the Mu'tazila) who, contrary to the majority of them, observes Maimonides, asserted that man can act through the 'created power,' were reproached for holding such a view. The created power as well as the will which normally precedes it, they urged, are accidents which cannot endure for two instants of time.<sup>29</sup> Now not only is it impossible for such accidents to cause any effects; what is more the latter claim amounts to a disavowal of God's title as the sole Agent and a sign of feeble faith.<sup>30</sup>

Here the primary motive of the Mutakallims, in edifying this occasionalist world-view, is revealed fully to sight. And yet, as Maimonides remarks, this world-view far from corroborating their theological presuppositions, appears to militate against their initial design to magnify the Almighty. For the key to this metaphysical edifice is the notion of contingency upon which it rests. Not only the properties or natures of things are alleged to be contingent (*jā'iz*), but the nature of the intellect itself as well. Yet if we were to strip things of the natural properties—upon which any demonstrative knowledge must rest—then we are left without a clue to demonstrating the existence of God Himself.<sup>31</sup> From their account of atoms and accidents, the Mutakallims, as we have seen, infer that the 'relative fixity' of

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things should be ascribed to the ‘constancy of God’s ways,’ as it were. But it is not impossible in reason, they argued (Prop. 10), that things should be entirely different from what they actually are: in magnitude, form, position, etc. For instance, it is not impossible, they said, that ‘man should be the size of a mountain or that he should be endowed with numerous heads, or that he should float in the air’; that ‘fire should cool and move downwards, while remaining fire, or that water should burn and move upwards, while remaining water,’<sup>32</sup> etc. Only where an assumption involves an internal contradiction can it be said to be impossible. Thus the co-existence of two opposites in the same substratum at the same time; or the existence of a substance devoid of accidents altogether or of an accident in no substratum (according to some of them);<sup>33</sup> the conversion of accidents into substances and vice versa; the interpenetration of bodies—all these instances are logically impossible.<sup>34</sup>

It is interesting to note here how, according to Maimonides, the Mutakallims accounted for this peculiar view by recourse to the ‘maxim of admissibility’ (*tajwiz*). This maxim stated that whatever is possible in reason is possible for God. Inasmuch as the co-existence of contradictories is logically impossible, it is impossible for God also. The Mutakallims, however, observes Maimonides, are guilty here of a grave error; for they do not seem to distinguish between what is possible in reason and what is possible in the imagination. Accordingly their thesis amounts to this: ‘that whatever is imaginable is possible, whether it corresponds to what exists actually or not; and whatever is not imaginable is impossible.’<sup>35</sup> But this conclusion does not follow unless we assume the validity of their whole metaphysics of atoms and accidents and the whole series of propositions underlying it. Indeed, this metaphysics becomes entirely redundant once the former maxim of admissibility is conceded; for is not this maxim itself sufficient to prove any thesis we wish to prove?<sup>36</sup> And is it not further clear from their claim that all the properties and natures of things are contingent upon the imagination ‘that it is not more proper for man to reason than the beetle’?<sup>37</sup>

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### III

#### THE ISLAMIC ACCOUNT OF THE METAPHYSICS OF ATOMS AND ACCIDENTS

No one who reads Maimonides' account of the fundamental tenets of Kalām can fail to perceive the strain of irony which runs through it. But despite this irony which lends dramatic flavour to his account, his fairness in reporting the facts is indisputable. A survey of the rise and development of Islamic occasionalism should be sufficient to prove this point.

By the middle of the ninth century, atomism had apparently become firmly established in the theological circles of Islam, as a theory which commended itself greatly as the antithesis of Aristotelianism. This appears from the account of Islamic atomism given by our earliest authority on the 'Islamic Schisms and Heresies,' al-Ash'arī who died in 935, in his *Maqalât al-Islâmiyyîn*. Dirär b. 'Amr, a contemporary of Wâsil b. 'Atâ (d. 748) and one of the earliest Mu'tazilite doctors of Basra,<sup>37</sup> seems to have been the earliest theologian to challenge what later became the orthodox dualism of substance (*jauhar*) and accident ('*arad*). Al-Ash'arī reports that this Dirär held that 'the body is an aggregate of accidents, which once constituted becomes the bearer (or substratum) of other accidents.'<sup>38</sup> Similarly a thorough-going Shi'ite materialist who professed an anthropomorphic view of God of the crudest type, Hishâm b. al-Hakam (end of eighth or beginning of ninth century) disputed likewise this orthodox dualism and reduced everything to the one notion of body, which according to him was divisible *ad infinitum*.<sup>39</sup>

Neither Dirär nor Hishâm, of course, were original in their challenge to atomism, which was refuted by Aristotle.<sup>40</sup> Thus, as would be expected, inside the Arab Aristotelian school, atomism had no chance of success.<sup>41</sup> The significant fact, however, is that Dirär and Hishâm appear to have been arguing against a definite atomic theory. Whether this theory had an organized following is impossible to determine in our present knowledge of the early

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Islamic sects. It is certain, however, that the fundamental problem of substance and accident had been under discussion as early as the beginnings of the eighth century.

It was in the ninth century, however, that the atomic theory of Kalām began to take definite shape. From al-Ash‘ari’s account we can infer that Abdu'l-Hudhail (d. 841 or 849); al-Iskāfi (d. 854–5); al-Jubā‘ī (d. 915); Mu‘ammar (contemporary of Abu'l-Hudhail); Hishām al-Fuwātī (another contemporary of his); ‘Abbād b. Sulaymān (died middle of ninth century) accepted the atomic theory.<sup>42</sup> Despite their agreement on the fundamental aspects of this theory, those theologians differed on many secondary points. Al-Jubā‘ī, who seems to have subscribed to a Platonic view of substance, e.g., defined substance ‘as the bearer (or substratum: hāmil) of accidents’ which, he added, ‘was such in itself and can be conceived as substance prior to its existence.’<sup>43</sup> This account of substance would have been perfectly intelligible but for a puzzling refinement upon it which al-Jubā‘ī made, holding that ‘although homogeneous (*jins wāhid*), substances are substances in themselves and are like or unlike in themselves; but do not differ in reality.’ This paradoxical statement might be construed to mean that, although generically similar, substances belong like Plato’s Ideas to different species. Other definitions of substance are reported by al-Ash‘ari; the most general and in a way the most adequate being the definition of substance ‘as that which subsists in itself and is susceptible of opposites.’<sup>44</sup> This highly abstract definition ascribed by al-Ash‘ari to ‘certain philosophizers’ aroused the suspicion of the Mutakallims. And so did another definition which al-Ash‘ari ascribes to the ‘Christians’; the definition of substance, namely, as ‘that which is self-subsisting.’<sup>45</sup> Since, whereas Christian theology recognized the validity of predicating the term substance (*Oὐσία* and *ὑποστάσης*) of God, Islamic theology did not.<sup>46</sup>

Those elementary attempts at a definition of substance reflect definitely, though imperfectly, the Aristotelian influence.<sup>47</sup> At a time when the Aristotelian works were accessible to the Muslim doctors it is, however, surprising that the Mutakallims should have

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been content with such fragmentary accounts of substance. Be this as it may, this speculation on substance and accident had led the Mutakallims to recognize the fundamental distinction between three cognate terms: substance, accident and body. Although some authors, like al-Sālihī, are reported to have identified body and substance, others, like the afore-mentioned Ḍirār, to have identified body and accident, nevertheless the common teaching seems to have been that ‘whatever is predicable of substance is not predicable of bodies’ (*Maqālāt*, p. 311)—or at any rate that certain predicates of substance are not applicable to bodies and vice versa. The generality of the Mutakallims, it is true, identified substance and atom (al-juz’ alladhi lā yatajazza’) which they conceived as the ‘bearer’ of accidents, so that it corresponded in reality to the Aristotelian notion of Matter (*ūlāy*), as the substratum of change or becoming, rather than to the ‘primary substance’ of the Categories.<sup>47</sup>

With regard to the separate existence of this substance, identified with the atom, the teaching of the Mutakallims revealed a considerable measure of divergence. Starting probably from the notion of God’s omnipotence, Abu'l-Hudhail claimed that ‘God could cause the atom to exist separately (infarāda) in such a way that it could be seen with the naked eye.’<sup>48</sup> In addition, he argued, the single atom was liable to motion and rest and their derivatives, such as union with other atoms and separation therefrom; but not to colour, taste, dimension, life, form, etc. Al-Jubā’i, on the other hand, found nothing amiss in ascribing to the single atom colour, taste, and contact; but rejected the possibility of life, power or knowledge inhering in it.<sup>49</sup> Other doctors, however, denied the separate existence of the atom, as well as its aptitude for contact, motion, rest, etc.<sup>50</sup> Hishām al-Fuwāti, who subscribed to this view, held further that the single atom was not susceptible of ‘contact (with other atoms), of distinction therefrom (bāyana) or of visibility’ altogether—since these were characteristic of the plane (rikn) or the body alone, according to him. It takes six such atoms, he said, to form a plane; and six planes, in turn, to form a body.<sup>51</sup>

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As to the composition of body, al-Ash'arī relates that some doctors held that a body arises out of the composition of two atoms: which according to al-Iskāfī, on the one hand, gave rise to a single body, and according to 'Isa al-Ṣufī, on the other, gave rise to two such bodies. Abu'l-Hudhail, however, argued that a body required a minimum of six atoms, corresponding to the six planes of the solid (p. 303). Mu'ammār, moreover, stipulated a minimum of eight such atoms, Hishām al-Fuwātī even thirty-six, because each of the six planes which Abu'l-Hudhail mentioned consisted, according to him, of six atoms (p. 304). This body was defined by Mu'ammār, al-Nazzām and others as 'that which is long, broad and deep,' and by Hishām b. al-Hakam as 'that which exists, is a thing and subsists in itself' (pp. 303–4). Another thinker, 'Abbād, however, defined the body 'as the sum-total of the atom and the accidents which inhere in (the atom) of necessity'—which excluded the other (or auxiliary) accidents. What is more this 'Abbād is further reported as identifying the body, in the manner of Descartes, with extension or place (*makān*) (pp. 304 and 305).

The dualism of substance and accident here outlined, despite those differences which were dictated very often by purely theological considerations, was before long enshrined as a fundamental tenet of orthodoxy. Al-Baghdādī (d. 1037), author of a heresiography and a compendium of scholastic theology, lists in the former work (*al-Faqīh bain al-Firaq*) the main theses on which the orthodox are agreed. The orthodox hold, he explains in the second article, that the world which they defined as 'everything other than God'<sup>52</sup> consists of two categories: substances and accidents. By substance, he writes, is meant 'everything endowed with colour,' by accident, 'the qualities inhering in substance, such as motion, rest, taste, smell, heat, etc.'<sup>53</sup> This substance, he adds, the orthodox generally identified with the indivisible particle (or atom). It was on that account that they anathematized (kaffara) al-Nazzām (d. 845?) and the 'philosophers'—who believed in the divisibility of substance *ad infinitum*.<sup>54</sup> For the latter thesis, he argues, contradicts the express statement of

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Allah in the Koran that He knows the determinate numbers (*ahṣa*) of all things (Q. 8–28), and nullifies the notion of comparative masses; since it is a mathematical axiom that infinity is not greater than infinity. Whereas, on the argument of the ‘philosophers’ who believe in an infinite number of particles constituting the body, a mountain is no greater than a mustard seed.<sup>55</sup> Similarly it is a tenet of orthodoxy that substances are homogeneous, whereas accidents are not. Accordingly the diversity of substances is not due to their ‘generic’ differences nor to the differences of natures proper to them, but rather to the heterogeneity of accidents supervening upon them.<sup>56</sup>

In vindicating the accidents against their negators, like al-Asṣam<sup>57</sup> and the Materialists, it can be urged, he writes, that the motion of a body subsequently to its rest is either due to itself ('ain) or to a notion (*ma'nā*) other than itself. Now it is impossible that it should be due to itself, since it remains unchanged in the two successive states of motion and rest; but must be due to something else which we call ‘accident.’<sup>58</sup> Similarly the existence of number proves the reality of accidents. For it is obvious that a number of strokes effected by an agent upon a patient, for instance, cannot be equated either with the agent, the patient or the instrument of striking. Consequently the number of strokes must be something distinct from all these factors and is what we understand by accident.<sup>59</sup>

The number of the accidents, according to the orthodox, adds our author, is manifold. That is why they further anathematized al-Nazzām, who held that all the accidents are reducible to the one accident of motion so that ‘whatever is not motion,’ he argued, ‘is body.’<sup>60</sup> This position al-Baghdādī refutes through a process of *reductio ad absurdum*; for if all the accidents are alike then ‘belief and disbelief, knowledge and ignorance, the actions of the Prophet (Muhammad) and the actions of Satan are all alike’—consequently al-Nazzām should not mind if it is said: ‘May God’s curse be upon him.’<sup>61</sup>

Altogether the list of accidents, as given by our author, comprises thirty different accidents. In a general way these accidents

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can be divided into primary and secondary accidents, depending on whether they accompany substance necessarily or not. The first of the primary accidents are the modi (*sing.* Kaun), such as motion, rest, composition and location. Second comes the accident of colour; third, the accident of heat; fourth, the accident of cold; fifth, that of dampness; sixth, that of dryness; seventh, that of smell; eighth, that of taste; ninth, that of sound; tenth, that of duration (*baqā'*). These, it appears, constitute the category of 'primary accidents' according to our author. Al-Ash'arī, however, is reported as having held that eight of these accidents accompany substance of necessity: modus, colour, taste, smell, heat or its opposite, dampness or its opposite, life or its opposite and finally duration.<sup>62</sup> Al-Ka'bī, a Mu'tazilite, and his followers, we are told, held that substance can be divested of all these accidents save colour; Abū Hāshim, son of al-Jubā'i, that upon its inception (*hudūth*) an atom can be divested of all accidents, save the accident of 'modus' (kaun).<sup>63</sup> Another Mu'tazilite, al-Šālihī, went a step farther and argued that an atom could exist without any accidents altogether.<sup>64</sup> In this he was followed by a little-known thinker, Šalih Qubba, about whom more will be said in due course. But this view represents a definite departure from the generally accepted teaching of the Mutakallims.

It is characteristic of these accidents, our author relates, that they are not susceptible of composition, contact or transmission (*intiqāl*), because these are the characteristics of bodies alone.<sup>65</sup> In this they are obviously analogous with the atoms, which were said by some Mutakallims, as we have seen, to be incapable of contact, composition or motion. The priority of the latter over the former could hardly be said to have been other than a purely logical priority. Not unnaturally the Mutakallims were baffled by the phenomenon of motion or change. For their discontinuous conception of matter made it difficult to rationalize motion in a satisfactory manner. A shrewd thinker, Mu'ammār,<sup>66</sup> in the manner of Parmenides and the Eleatics, denied the reality of motion altogether and ascribed it to linguistic usage only.<sup>67</sup> For, he argued, what differentiates motion from rest is a notion

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(ma'nā) distinct from both. This notion in turn is the outcome of another notion and so on *ad infinitum*; so that the difference between motion and rest like this infinite regress cannot be determined.<sup>68</sup> Al-Nazzām who agreed with Mu'ammar's notion of nature, held a completely antithetical view of motion. Everything in the universe, he argued, is either body or motion. Not only accidents but even the actions of man were stated by him to belong to the universal category of motion. Rest itself was described as a 'motion of intention' (*i'timād*), as distinguished from actual motion or 'motion in space' (*nuqlah*), as he called it.<sup>69</sup> When a body is said to be static at a certain point, this statement, he explained, can only mean that it had 'moved in it twice.' In contradistinction to Mu'ammar and in the manner of Heraclitus, he denied the reality of rest and ascribed it to linguistic usage only.<sup>70</sup> Yet the most original teaching of al-Nazzām on this subject was his notion of the 'leap' (*tafrāh*); or the claim that a body could move from point A to point C without traversing the intermediary point, B. If al-Nazzām had ascribed this circumstance to God's direct agency it is certain that al-Ash'arites, who anathematized him on more than one score, would not have found cause to quarrel with him on this score too. Instead, he claimed that the body in question was not annihilated in the interval and eventually re-created at the point of its intermediary or final destination, as the Ash'arite theory of atoms and accidents would have stipulated—but rather remained whole and entire in the process.<sup>71</sup> Al-Nazzām, however, seems to have advanced this theory in order to account for the possibility of traversing a given distance, which according to him, as we have seen, consisted of an infinite number of particles.<sup>72</sup> In support of this theory he is said by al-Ash'arī to have adduced various arguments like the argument concerning the relative velocities of the upper and lower parts of a spinning top.<sup>73</sup> This view, however, was rejected by the majority of the Mutakallims; but it is interesting to note that even those who, like Abu'l-Hudhail, dismissed this notion, still maintained that 'a part of the body might be static while the rest of it was in motion.'<sup>74</sup> Thus the motion of a horse, they

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argued, is interrupted by innumerable, though imperceptible, moments of rest; and that is why the speed of one horse is greater than that of another. Al-Jubā'i, who adhered to this view in a modified form, inverted the relationship and argued that the rest of a body is likewise interrupted by ‘imperceptible’ moments of motion and that is what makes it capable of motion subsequently.<sup>75</sup>

The general Ash‘arite view of motion was that motion and rest were two of the ‘modi’ of substance. A substance which moves from one point to another, they argued, is at rest in relation to the second point and in motion in relation to the first. Only al-Qalānī, a rather dissident Ash‘arite, is reported by al-Baghdādī as holding that rest was two successive ‘modi’ in the same place, motion two successive ‘modi,’ one in the first place and the other in the second.<sup>76</sup> This conception of motion naturally raised the question: at what time does motion supervene upon the body? Some Mutakallims, like al-Nazzām, claimed that it supervenes upon it while in its initial position; others that it supervenes upon it when it had settled in its second position or ‘locus.’ This was the view of Abu'l-Hudhayl, al-Jubā'i, his son Abū Hāshim, and al-Ash‘arī.<sup>77</sup> Bishr b. al-Mu'tamir (d. 825), head of the Mu'tazilite School of Baghdad, on the other hand, denied both alternatives and argued that a body moves through a distinct motion, which does not supervene upon it in either of its two successive states.<sup>78</sup>

Perhaps the most characteristic feature of the accidents of Kalām is their perishable nature. The Ash‘arite school in general held that accidents were perishable by definition, so to speak; since their persistence in being was unthinkable. Al-Bāqilānī (d. 1013), for instance, who is credited with having refined the atomism of Islam, defines the accident as ‘that which cannot endure . . . but perishes in the second instant of its coming-to-be’ —a definition for which he finds a scriptural basis in the Koran (8: 67 and 46: 24) which speaks of the ‘transient things’ of this world (*a'rád*).<sup>79</sup> In this he seems simply to follow the lead of his master al-Ash‘arī who reports anonymously a similar view.<sup>80</sup> This view, which was undoubtedly held by al-Ash‘arī himself and the rest of the Ash‘arite school, was accepted also by a

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dissident Mu'tazilite doctor, al-Ka'bi.<sup>81</sup> But many Mu'tazilite doctors could not reconcile themselves wholly to this notion of perishable accidents, because it militated against their notion of human activity and their allied doctrine of generation (*tawallud*).<sup>82</sup> Consequently some of them disputed this thesis and assigned a certain durability to some accidents. Abu'l-Hudhail, who believed in a qualified theory of generation, for instance, assigned to the category of perishable accidents the accidents of will and motion; to that of durable accidents a number of other accidents such as colour, life, knowledge, etc. And so did Bishr b. al-Mu'tamir, author of this decisive view of generation, as well as al-Jubā'i, his son Abū-Hāshim, al-Nazzām, Dirār b. 'Amr and others. Al-Nazzām, who reduced all accidents to that of motion, as we have seen, deemed it impossible for motion to endure.<sup>83</sup>

In proving the perishable character of accidents, al-Baghdādī alleges that the 'thesis of the durability of accidents entails the impossibility of their destruction.' 'For if an accident is said to endure in itself [he writes] . . . then it could persist in being till the emergence of an opposite thereof necessitating its destruction. However, there is no sufficient reason why this opposite should arise and overcome thereby the tendency of its being to resist this incursion.'<sup>84</sup>

With regard to the duration of substances themselves, we have seen how the Mutakallims made it contingent upon the inherence in it of the accident of duration. But if this accident itself does not endure the question arises: What kind of precedence does substance enjoy over accidents and what, in fact, is the point of the Mutakallims' initial distinction between substance and accident? From their account of accidents it is clear that any duration which might belong to them rests entirely with God, and so does the duration of substances indirectly; so that the latter no less than the former seem to owe their being as well as their duration to God alone.

It is worth noting here that the Mutakallims, while assigning duration (*baqā'*) to the category of accidents, reserved to its being (*hudūth*)<sup>85</sup> a separate status. But the being, no less than

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the duration, of a substance depends exclusively on the divine fiat. The Mutakallims, it is true, argue that a thing is brought into being out of nothing; this being the first stage in its life-history, so to speak. Assuming, however, that God wishes it to endure He creates in it the accident of duration, and this is the second stage in that life-history.<sup>86</sup> The point of this distinction between being and duration in the metaphysics of Kalām, however, is very difficult to perceive indeed. The substance, like its indwelling accidents, perishes forthwith upon its creation and is re-created by God so long as He wishes. But every such act of re-creation implies a fresh start in the life-history of substance, so that duration is no more and no less than a process of successive phases of being (*ḥudūth*). Like duration, therefore, being itself appears to be an accident entirely dependent upon the divine will (despite the failure of the Mutakallims to perceive this corollary).

On the parallel question of extinction (*fanā'*) the generality of the Ash'arites, notwithstanding their general thesis that a substance cannot be divested of a set of accidents or their opposites, held that the extinction of a body is the natural outcome of God's refraining from creating in it the accident of duration; which leads to its cessation in the 'second state' of its coming-to-be.<sup>87</sup> Al-Bāqilānī, however, while concurring partially in this view, ascribed extinction to God's withholding of the accidents of 'modus' and 'colour' from the body. Inasmuch as a body cannot be divested of those two accidents, he argued, such an action would necessarily entail the annihilation of the body.<sup>88</sup> For unlike the generality of the Ash'arites, al-Bāqilānī did not reckon duration among the accidents, so that God would have to cease creating this added accident in the body when He wished it to perish.<sup>89</sup> In this he was more consistent than his master: for since the being of the body depended upon God's creation in it of a continuous stream of accidents which did not endure for a single moment; its not-being would logically ensue upon the cessation of this stream. Al-Qalānisi, another fellow-Ash'arite, perceiving perhaps this paradoxical aspect of the teaching of the master, proposed a striking solution of this

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problem. When God wishes to annihilate the body, he argued, He creates *in it* the accident of extinction which leads to its annihilation forthwith.<sup>90</sup> Despite its fantastic character, this solution, as we have hinted, was perfectly in keeping with the general view of the Mutakallims that a body cannot be divested of a set of positive accidents or their opposites. And in fact, notwithstanding their special teaching concerning extinction, the Ash'arites held that death itself was one of the accidents which God 'creates in the dead man'<sup>91</sup>— a view which rightly evoked the irony of Maimonides, who wonders how long indeed does God need to create the accident of death in the dead man before he is truly dead.<sup>92</sup> The Mu'tazilite account of extinction, however,<sup>93</sup> differed considerably from this view of the matter. Abu'l-Hudhail, who denied that duration was an accident super-added to the body, argued that the extinction, like the duration of the body, is simply the outcome of God's decree. When God wishes to destroy a body He creates the accident of extinction in no *substratum* (*maḥall*) and this leads to its annihilation.<sup>94</sup> Al-Jubā'ī and his son, on the other hand, added a rather striking refinement to this view, alleging that God creates the accident of extinction in no substratum and this leads to the *total* annihilation of the whole world. Consequently, they claimed, it is impossible for God to destroy certain bodies in the universe without destroying the whole. Since it is by virtue of an accident which contradicts bodies, as such, that this destruction is brought about.<sup>95</sup> Al-Jālyiz, on the other hand, went to the other extreme and held, no doubt following Aristotle, that it was impossible for bodies to cease.<sup>96</sup> Yet both within the Ash'arite and the Mu'tazilite schools, those two extreme views were received with disapprobation because they contradicted flagrantly the fundamentally Koranic notion of God's power to do or undo things at will.

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### IV

#### CORRELATION, LOGICAL AND CAUSAL, AND ITS MODALITY

Both the Ash'arite and the Mu'tazilite Mutakallims accepted the contingent metaphysics of atoms and accidents outlined above. But the Mu'tazila, who professed belief in the freedom of the will,<sup>97</sup> were bound to discover sooner or later that this fleeting conception of the universe was entirely adverse to this belief. For the freedom of the will would remain an empty notion unless the human agent is said to be endowed with a certain efficacy whereby he can effect a series of conditions in nature of which he could be said to be the author. Otherwise the whole notion of human responsibility and of divine justice, in which the Mu'tazila were so keenly interested,<sup>98</sup> would be endangered.

Now the occasionalist world-view of Kalām, which depended entirely and directly on God's active intervention, could hardly be said to admit of such a possibility. It was this circumstance which apparently led some Mu'tazilite doctors to introduce a certain measure of continuity into the cosmic order, whereby the efficacy of man in wilful action could be vindicated, in their doctrine of generation (*tawallud*). The credit for initiating this view seems to belong to Bishr b. al-Mu'tamir (d. 825), head of the Mu'tazilite school of Baghdad.<sup>99</sup> Probably under the influence of the 'philosophers,' as al-Shahrastānī remarks—this Bishr argued that 'whatever is generated from our deeds is of our doing.'<sup>100</sup> In this manner he tacitly admitted the causal correlation between the will as agent and the act as effect, or at least, this was one of the major charges directed against Bishr and his followers over this question.<sup>101</sup> Abu'l-Hudhayl al-'Allāf, his contemporary and head of the rival school of Basrah, accepted this thesis in a modified form and introduced a subtle distinction between acts of which the agent knows the modality (*kaifiya*) and acts which he does not. An example of the former was the

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flight of the arrow or the sound caused by the impact of two objects upon one another. An example of the latter was pleasure, hunger or knowledge, etc. Man, Abu'l-Hudhail argued, could rightly be said to be the author of those acts of which he knows the modality; whereas acts which he cannot scrutinize in the aforesaid manner must be ascribed to God.<sup>102</sup> Abu'l-Hudhail's motive in so modifying the view of Bishr seems to have been the desire to ward off one of the charges of the anti-Mu'tazilite polemists, who alleged that the Mu'tazilite view that 'man was the creator of his deeds,' contradicted the self-evident maxim that a creator ought to know the effects of his creation 'in every respect.' And this could not be said to be the case with man who has a 'general knowledge' of the effects of his actions only.<sup>103</sup> What gave point to this highly speculative matter seems to have been a purely legal consideration, namely, whether a man was *legally* responsible for deeds caused (or generated) posthumously through his action.<sup>104</sup> A purely speculative interest in this question, at least in part, could not of course be excluded. Despite this minor disagreement, Bishr and Abu'l-Hudhail seem to have agreed on two points which are central to any effective belief in moral freedom: *firstly*, that in the *inward* domain of willing and choosing man exercises a definite freedom of initiative;<sup>104</sup> *secondly*, that man can effect through his will certain deeds in the *outward* sphere of nature by causing (or generating) such effects. In this way the concept of causality, as we have stated, is tacitly presupposed and a certain measure of consistency achieved.

It should not be imagined, however, that the Mu'tazila as a whole concurred in these two elemental propositions, much as it would appear that they constituted the irreducible minimum of any effective belief in moral freedom. It is true that the Mu'tazila generally concurred in conceding the reality of free will, that is, of man's initiative in the inward world of volition. But when it came to the second proposition, their teaching revealed a wide measure of divergence which, in many cases, amounted to virtual incompatibility. For in seeking to determine the human share in activity, many representatives of the Mu'tazilite school found

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themselves confronted with the fundamentally Islamic notion of God's absolute power and uniqueness. Ṣāliḥ Qubba,<sup>105</sup> a little-known thinker, for instance, is reported by al-Ash'ari as saying that 'man acts only in himself,' so that 'whatever comes about through his action is of God's doing initially (*ibtidā'an*).'<sup>106</sup> Compelled like the Mutakallims in general, and the Ash'arites in particular, to safeguard the notion of divine omnipotence, he denied that there existed any necessary correlation between the phenomena of nature altogether; because in every such phenomenon, he reasoned, we must seek the direct working of God. Thus, he argued, 'it is possible that fire be brought into contact with wood many times and yet God create no burning in it'; 'that God might cause a man to burn in fire and still not to experience any pain but instead pleasure,' if God so willed; that 'He might create (in him) perception (*idrāk*) together with blindness and knowledge together with death.'<sup>107</sup> When asked: 'Would you deny that you might be in Mecca at the present moment sitting under a tent, but are unaware of it, because God did not create in you the knowledge thereof,—he replied: 'I would not deny it.' Whereupon he was appropriately nicknamed Qubba (or tent).<sup>108</sup> The only other Mu'tazilite whose teaching on this question came very close to that of Ṣāliḥ Qubba was Abu'l-Hussain al-Ṣāliḥī (end of ninth century). Like Ṣāliḥ, this Ṣāliḥī did not recognize any limitation on God's power, short of infringing the law of contradiction. Consequently, he argued, God could create death and knowledge in the same subject, as He can in fact create life and ignorance in it. But he refused to admit the possibility of creating life and death simultaneously in the subject (or atom); since life, according to him, contradicts death whereas power does not, or else, he added, powerlessness would contradict life, which is disproved by observation.<sup>108</sup>

Those two extremists were not content with those already devastating claims, but challenged also one of the most fundamental tenets of Kalām, namely, the necessary co-existence of atom and accident. Such co-existence, they alleged against the generality of the Mutakallims, was by no means necessary. Not

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only can God create in the same subject (or atom) all the accidents He wishes, so long as He does not involve Himself in contradiction; He can even create an atom devoid of any accompanying accidents altogether in such wise that 'it would be neither in motion nor at rest, neither in a state of separation nor in a state of aggregation, neither cold nor hot, neither damp nor dry'<sup>109</sup>—etc. For God could perform what for us is quasi-impossible: He could create perfect sight in the eye and still withhold perception from it when its object is exposed to it.<sup>110</sup>

The fantastic teaching of those two thinkers was by no means representative of the general trend of Islamic scholasticism. For, as al-Ash'arī remarks in summing up the views of the Muta-kallims, 'the generality of the learned' and 'the majority of the pious' deemed it absurd that substances should exist without accidents or that perfect sight should not result in the vision of the object of sight.<sup>111</sup> Yet it is difficult to see how such a conclusion, as Ṣāliḥ and al-Ṣāliḥī drew from the premisses of Kalām, could have been obviated. Even less extreme doctors, like al-Jubā'i and Abu'l-Hudhail, found themselves driven to challenge the alleged correlation between cause and effect or between condition and conditioned. The former, while denying that God could create perception (*idrāk*) alongside blindness, conceded that a body could be brought into contact with fire and yet God may not create burning in it.<sup>112</sup> Abu'l-Hudhail, however, despite his adherence to the theory of generation in a modified form, did not exclude the former possibility, but added that God could create 'direct action together with death . . . muteness together with speech,' etc.<sup>113</sup> Both Abu'l-Hudhail and al-Jubā'i, as we have seen, further maintained the exceptional thesis that God could create an accident in no substratum, outstripping in this even al-Ṣāliḥī and his followers who considered that impossible.<sup>114</sup>

Such a view of Abu'l-Hudhail and al-Jubā'i was doubtless an expedient for interpreting their theological notion of the creation and the annihilation of the universe, and it is significant that, as far as we know, they did not admit the possibility of the creation

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in no substratum of any other accidents. The Ash‘arites generally condemn this teaching as tantamount to infidelity (kufr).<sup>115</sup> But this extreme view, despite the strictures of the Ash‘arites, was logically implicit in their thesis of the unlimited power of God. For having posited this discontinuous and ephemeral world of atoms and accidents and having suspended it wholly to the throne of the Almighty, as it were, there was no guarding against the temptation to ascribe to His unlimited power feats which verge on the absurd. The recognition of the validity of the law of contradiction, even where the decrees of the Almighty were concerned, placed an important limitation on God’s freedom of action; but it could not in the least affect His power to act freely and imperiously in all those spheres where this law was complied with. Consequently no necessary correlation between concepts was admitted, unless its negation resulted in a violation of the law of contradiction. We will see at length the development of this thesis in al-Ghazālī’s works; but even a generation or so earlier al-Baghdādī, summing up the teaching of the Ash‘arites in their polemic against the Mu‘tazilite theory of generation, brings out fully the implications of this major tenet of Ash‘arite Kalām. ‘The Qadarites contend,’ he writes, ‘that man might effect in himself a deed upon which there ensues a deed in another, of which he would be the agent, as he is of the cause (effected in himself). . . . According to the Orthodox (ashābuna), however, whatever is called ‘product’ (mutawallid) by the Qadarites is of God’s own doing; since it is inadmissible that man should be said to act outside the sphere of his (inward) activity. It is conceivable, in fact, that man might stretch the bow of his arch and send the arrow from his hand, and yet God refrain from creating flight (in the arrow). . . . It is likewise conceivable that the arrow may hit its target without breaking or rending it . . . that man may bring fire into contact with cotton, without burning it, contrary to habit; as He has decreed habitually that the child should be born only after the copulation of his parents, obesity only after feeding. Yet were it His will to create this (*sc.* the effect) from nothing, He would be able to do so.’<sup>116</sup>

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## CHAPTER ONE

<sup>1</sup> Cf. L. O'Leary, *How Greek Science passed to the Arabs*, p. 52, and Gardet, *Introduction à la Théologie Musulmane*, p. 195. A parallel interest in Greek logic was cultivated by the Monophysites, and Sergius of Rash'aina, the greatest of the Monophysite scholars, is responsible for the translation of Porphyry's *Isagoge*, Aristotle's *Categories* as well as works on medicine and astronomy. Cf. O'Leary, *Arabic Thought*, London, 1922, pp. 45–6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibn al-Nadīm, Fihrist*, ed. Flügel, pp. 242 and 354, and De Boer, *Hist. of Philosophy in Islam*, p. 152.

<sup>3</sup> Called 'Baital-Hikmat' (House of Wisdom): cf. *Fihrist*, p. 243. In the course of Ma'mūn's reign, it appears that the following works were translated: Ptolemy's *Almajest*; Euclid's *Elements*; Plato's *Timaeus*; Aristotle's *Meteorology* and the spurious *de Mundo*, the *Sophistica* and the spurious *Theology: a paraphrase of Plotinus's Enneads*; Philoponus's *Commentary on the Physics of Aristotle* and Alexander's *Commentary on the Generation and Corruption*. Cf. De Boer, op. cit., pp. 18–19, and O'Leary, op. cit., p. 152.

<sup>4</sup> The first person to initiate discussion on the question of freewill (*qadar*) at Basra, according to tradition, was Ma'bad al-Juhānī. This Ma'bad, who was put to death by order of the Caliph Abdul-Malik in 699, is reported to have conversed with a Christian from Mesopotamia called Susan. (Cf. Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, p. 53; *Milal*, p. 17 and *Ibn Qutaiba, K. al-Ma'ārif*, ed. Wustenfeld, p. 301.) Another Ghailān of Damascus, who was killed by order of Hishām (105–125 A.H.), continued this speculation on freewill, which reaches a higher degree of refinement with Wāṣil b. 'Atā' (d. 748), the founder of the Mu'tazila school. To those earliest 'innovators,' Shahrastānī adds the names of Yūnus al-Aswārī and 'Amr b. 'Ubaid (d. 762), loc. cit. As evidence of contact between Muslim and Christian theologians in Damascus, the tract which sums up a discussion between a Christian and an imaginary Saracen is worth mentioning here. This tract is attributed to Theodorus Abu Curra (d. 826), disciple of St. John of Damascus. Cf. Migne, P.G., Vol. XCIV, col. 1589 f. The influence of St. John himself, who held an official charge under the Umayyads before his ordination around 725, cannot be discounted. Cf. Gardet, *Introduction à la Théologie Musulmane*, p. 201 f. and p. 36 f.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Milal*, p. 18, where Abu'l Hudhail and al-Nazzām are singled out; cf. also pp. 37, 38 and 42, 48 and 52, where other Mu'tazilite doctors are so taunted; also *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, p. 485; *Uṣūl al-Dīn*, p. 36, etc.

<sup>6</sup> Note, e.g., in addition to their atomism which, as Maimonides points out, was taken over from Democritus (cf. infra), the thesis of *Concealment and Manifestation* (*Kunūn* and *Zuhūr*), which was upheld by al-Nazzām, Abu'l-Hudhail, Mu'ammar, Bishr b. al-Mu'tamir, etc. (cf. *Maq.*, pp. 329 and 328). Shahrastānī, on the authority of Porphyry, ascribes it to Anaxagoras: cf. *Milal*, p. 257 and ZDMC, LXIII, 1909, pp. 774 ff. Note also *Mu'ammar's notion of Nature* (*Tab'*), taken over likewise by al-Nazzām and others: cf. *Milal*, pp. 38 and 46; *Maq.*, p. 548; *K. al Intiṣār*, p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. De. Boer, op. cit., p. 24 f.

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<sup>8</sup> This is the theme of al-Fārābī's treatise on the *Agreement between the two Philosophers*, ed. Dieterici, Leiden, 1890, where al-Fārābī states that the allegation of differences between the two fathers of philosophy, who invented and perfected it at the same time, is due to mere ignorance, pp. 1 and 2.

<sup>9</sup> The anonymous translation of the *More Nebuchim* (Arab. *Dalālat al-Hā'irīn*) was made from the Hebrew version of Yahūdā Harīṣī, instead of the original Arabic. Cf. L. I. Newman, *Cahiers Juifs*, 1935, p. 117. All our references, unless otherwise stated, will be to Arabic edition in Tome I of S. Munk's *Guide des Égarés*, Paris, 1856, 1861 and 1866.

<sup>9a</sup> Cf., e.g., *S. Theol.* I, qu. 46, a. 1, and qu. 46, a. 2; qu. 69, a. 2 ad 5 and qu. 74, a. 3 ad 2; I-II, qu. 102, a. 3 ad 4 and 6; qu. 105, a. 2 ad 12; *De pot.*, qu. 3, a. 14 and 17; *S. cont. Gent.*, Bk. II, CC. 31 f. Aquinas, however, was far from accepting the authority of Maimonides slavishly; as, e.g., over question of Divine Names. Cf. *ibid.*, I, qu. 13, a. 2 and 5, and the question of providence —I, qu. 22, a. 2 ad 5.

<sup>10</sup> In addition to Maimonides' *Guide*, mention must be made of Averroës in whose *Commentaries* on Aristotle frequent allusions are made to the Mutakallims (*loquentes nostrae lege*), cf., e.g., *In Met.*, Venice, 1552, Bk. XII, fol. 143b, and Bk. IX, fol. 109a; *In Phys.*, Bk. VIII, fol. 159a, 155a and 161b; *in de Celo*, Venice, 1550, Bk. I, fol. 51, etc. Raymond Martin, a well-informed Arabist, who wrote his *Pugio Fidei adversus Mauros et Judaeos* in 1278 according to Mandonnet (cf. Siger de Brabant, etc., 1911, Vol. II, p. xxviii) could not have influenced Aquinas, who died in 1274.

<sup>11</sup> *Guide*, Vol. I, ch. 71. Maimonides refers the origins of the teaching of the Mutakallims on this question to the 'Greek and Syriac Christians' of whom he names Yahia b. 'Adi (d. 974) and John the Grammarian (d. 568), author of *De aeternitate mundi*, in which are refuted Proclus's arguments for the eternity of the world. Cf. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 254, and De Boer, op. cit., p. 159.

<sup>12</sup> *Guide*, pp. 95b and 97b.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96b. Cp. Bāqilānī, *Tamhid*, pp. 44–5, who argues that the world having a beginning in time (Muḥḍath) must of necessity have an author (Muḥdith) and a fashioner.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Guide*, 109a; cp. *Uṣūl*, p. 67, where al-Baghdādī attributes this view to al-Ash'arī and his followers, like al-Bāqilānī; cf. also *Maqālāt*, pp. 366–7.

<sup>15</sup> Viz. the Mu'tazila, as Maimonides states, *Guide*, loc. cit. According to al-Baghdādī this was the view of Abū'l-Hudhayl, Bishr b. al-Mu'tamir, al-Jubā'i and his son Abū Hāshim, Dirār b. 'Amr and al-Nazzām; cf. *Uṣūl*, pp. 50 and 51; cf. also *Magālāt*, pp. 358–9.

<sup>16</sup> *Guide*, p. 109b. In *Uṣūl*, p. 67, al-Baghdādī attributes this view to al-Jubā'i and his son Abū Hāshim of the Mu'tazilite school. Al-Qalānišī, an Ash'arite, is reported as holding that God annihilates the body by creating the accident of 'extinction' in it. We shall use the term 'extinction' in preference to annihilation, because like the Arabic 'fānā' it is intransitive.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Physics*, IV, pp. 219a 1f.; 211a 13–14; VI, p. 233a 12 f.: cp. al-Kindī (d. 873), *Epistles*, ed. Abu Raīda, Cairo, 1950, pp. 119 and 204 f.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Guide*, p. 106a; cf. F. D. al-Rāzī, *K. al-Ab'a'in*, pp. 254–5. Al-Rāzī proves here that bodies consist of atoms from the atomic composition of time,

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space and motion, which are said 'to have a certain correspondence' to one another.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Guide*, p. 106b. Maimonides actually speaks of the 'translation of one atom from one point to a contiguous one.' It is worth noting that this manner of expression is only roughly correct, since we cannot speak of the translation of the same atom, but only of its re-creation in a different point of space. Translation (*intiqāl*) is possible only on the assumption of an identical 'subject' (in this case the atom) moving in a continuum.

<sup>20</sup> *Guide*, p. 106b; cf. *Maqālāt*, p. 321, and *Fīsāl*, V, p. 107.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. Cp. *K. al-Arba'in*, p. 262, where al-Rāzī gives this argument further point by adding that the Mutakallims say that God, being a free Agent, dissolves the millstone into its component parts during its revolution and restores it to its original state when it stops. Cf. also *K. al-Masā'il*, p. 45.

<sup>22</sup> 2nd Prop. The impossibility of the 'interpenetration of bodies' is reported by al-Ash'arī to have been affirmed by the 'generality of the orthodox,' as well as the two Mu'tazilite doctors, Abū'l-Hudhayl and Dirār b. 'Amr; but to have been disputed by al-Nazzām and the followers of Hishām b. al-Hakam. Cf. *Maqālāt*, pp. 327-8 and 60; also *Fīsāl*, V, pp. 60-1.

<sup>23</sup> It will be remembered that the existence of the void is one of the issues over which the Mutakallims departed from Aristotle and his Arab followers. On this subject, cf. *K. al-Masā'il*, pp. 24 ff.; *K. al-Arba'in*, pp. 270-5; *al-Fīsāl*, I, p. 25 ff.; *al-Tamhīd*, pp. 118 ff., etc.

<sup>24</sup> Cp. definitions given by al-Juwainī, *Irshād*, p. 10, al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl*, p. 33, and al-Bāqilānī, *Tamhīd*, p. 44; cf. also *Maqālāt*, p. 310-12.

<sup>25</sup> *Guide*, p. 108a; cp. *Fāraq*, p. 113, *Maq.*, p. 311, and *Fīsāl*, V, p. 69. This view was disputed by Hishām b. al-Hakam and 'Abbās b. Sulaymān—according to *Maq.*, loc. cit. On the accidentality of life, cf. *Maq.*, 377, and *Uṣūl*, p. 40 f.—which lists the accidents in accordance with the Ash'arite view. The list includes among other accidents: life, knowledge, faith, will, speech, etc. The soul, which is also an accident 'according to the majority of the Mutakallims,' is said to inhere 'in one specific atom of the whole of which man consists' (*Guide*, p. 108b; cf. *Fīsāl*, V, p. 74, *Maq.*, p. 337, and Averroës, *Tahāfut*, p. 588). Reason, on the other hand, was universally stated to be an accident 'inhering in a single atom of the rational whole'—as Ibn Hazm reports in *Fīsāl*, V, pp. 79-80.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Tamhīd*, p. 42, where the accident is defined as 'that which cannot endure . . . but ceases to exist in the second state of its coming to be.' Al-Bāqilānī, like al-Ash'arī (cf. *Maq.*, p. 370) finds a scriptural basis for this definition in Koran, 8: 67 and 46: 24.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 109b. On the Ash'arite denial of the Nature (or Natures) which the philosophers maintained, cf. *Fīsāl*, V, p. 14, *Tamhīd*, pp. 56 ff., and *Irshād*, pp. 133-5.

<sup>28</sup> *Guide*, p. 110b. On this concomitance (*taqārun* or *iqtirān* as al-Ghazālī calls it) cf. *Iqtisād*, pp. 100 and 45, *Tahāfut*, pp. 237 and 279, and infra.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Guide*, p. 110b. The accidental character of the 'created power' (*qudrat* or *isīṭā'ah*) was recognized by the Ash'arites: cf. *Irshād*, p. 123, *Milāl*, p. 68, and *Muhaṣṣal*, p. 73. Maimonides states in the same passage that some of the Ash'arites, notwithstanding this, conceded a certain share to the 'created power'

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in action'—which is obviously an allusion to their view of acquisition (or *Kasb*). Cf. *Milal*, p. 69, and *Nihāyat*, pp. 55 f. and 77 f. In the former place Shahrastānī sets the teaching of al-Bāqillānī in opposition to al-Ash'ari's who denied any efficacy to the 'created power' altogether: cf. also *K. al-Luma'*, Ch. 5; *Irshād*, pp. 108 ff.; *Iqtisād*, pp. 44 ff. and *Iḥiyā'*, IV, pp. 219–21.

<sup>30</sup> *Guide*, ibid. This is confirmed by the polemics against the Mu'tazila in *Irshād*, p. 106, *Nihāyat*, p. 54, *Ibāna*, p. 9, and *Iḥiyā'*, IV, p. 211, where genuine faith is defined as belief in the exclusive causality of God. Cf. infra.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Guide*, Ch. 75, argt. 6, and Ch. 76, argt. 3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113a.

<sup>33</sup> The general view that an accident cannot exist in no substratum (*mahall*) was disputed only by the two Mu'tazilite doctors, Abu'l-Hudhail and al-Jubā'i Al-Ṣālihi and his followers, as well as Ṣāliḥ Qubba, disputed the view that a substance cannot be divested of accidents altogether. *Maq.*, pp. 310–12, *Uṣūl*, pp. 56–7, and *Irshād*, p. 13.

<sup>34</sup> *Guide*, p. 113a.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113b.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, and pp. 114a–b.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114a.

<sup>38</sup> *Maq.*, pp. 305 and 281; cf. also *Uṣūl*, p. 46.

<sup>39</sup> *Maq.*, pp. 343 and 59, *Fīṣal*, V, p. 66, and *Farq*, p. 114. Hishām, according to one account reported in *Maq.*, p. 345, conceded the existence of 'notions' (*sing. ma'nā*) in addition to that of body. On his anthropomorphism, cf. *Maq.*, pp. 31 ff., and *Farq*, p. 216. Two other names should be added to this school of 'negators of atoms': al-Najjar (contemporary of al-Khayyāt who died end of ninth century) and Ḥafṣ al-Fard (contemporary of Abu'l-Hudhail, d. 841 or 849).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Physics*, I, 189a 27 f.; VI, 231a 24 ff.

<sup>41</sup> Al-Kindī (d. 870), the first Arab philosopher, wrote a tract in refutation of the atomic theory (cf. *Fīhrīst*, p. 259). Avicenna (d. 1036) disproves atomism in *al-Najāt*, pp. 102 ff., and *Ishārat*, pp. 90–1.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *Maq.*, pp. 301 ff.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 307 and 161; cf. also *Farq*, p. 164, and *K. al-Masā'il*, p. 12. This view was also upheld by al-Khayyāt and presumably his disciple al-Kā'bī. Cf. al-Shahrastānī, *Milal*, p. 53.

<sup>44</sup> *Maq.*, p. 307 and p. 308.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306.

<sup>46</sup> Al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtisād*, p. 20. Al-Karramites, or the anthropomorphists of Islam, spoke of God as 'jauhar' and as 'body' in opposition to the general Islamic view. Cf. *Milal*, p. 80.

<sup>47</sup> It will be recalled that Aristotle defines substance (*οὐσία*) in its restricted or 'primary sense' as 'that which is neither predictable of a subject nor present in a subject,' viz. the particular thing: cf. *Categories*, 2a 11–13. This notion, however, is later generalized to include Matter (*ὕλη*), Form (*μορφή*), as well as their union in the concrete object: *Met. VIII*, pp. 1042a–26 f. Similarly in *Met. XII*, pp. 1070a–10 f., Aristotle reckons the elements, e.g. fire, earth, water, etc., among the things denoted by the term substance (*οὐσία*). Nature (*φύσις*)

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is itself said to be substance. This generalized view of substance paved the way to the Aristotelian view of a 'separate' substance—the *Inmoveable Mover*—XII, 1071b5, etc. When he speaks of substance in general, however, Aristotle means the particular or individuated being (whether separate or inseparable) which as the definition above implies is the bearer of essential and accidental predicates.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 315.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 311–12 and 314–15.

<sup>50</sup> This view is ascribed to 'Abbād b. Sulaymān (died second half of ninth century) on the authority of al-Nazzām in his book on the 'Atom.' Cf. *Maq.*, pp. 316 and 311.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 315.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. op. cit., p. 315, and *Uṣūl*, p. 33.

<sup>53</sup> *Uṣūl*, p. 33.

<sup>54</sup> *Farg*, p. 316, and *Uṣūl*, p. 36; cf. *Milal*, p. 38, and *Fīṣal*, V, p. 92.

<sup>55</sup> *Uṣūl*, p. 36.

<sup>56</sup> *Farg*, p. 316; against this theory of Natures, cf. *Tamhid*, p. 56 f., and *Irshād*, pp. 133–5, etc.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *Maq.*, p. 344, and *Munia*, p. 32.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. this argument in *Uṣūl*, p. 37; cf. *Irshād*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>59</sup> *Uṣūl*, ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 46. Al-Ash'arī reports that al-Nazzām defined body as 'the long, broad and deep' (*Maq.*, pp. 3 and 4). He distinguished two types of motion: motion of intention (*iṭimād*), and motion in space (*nuqla*) (p. 324). Thus rest, according to him, was a 'motion of intention,' whereas colours, tastes, sounds, capacity, etc., were reckoned by him as bodies. *Uṣūl*, p. 46.

<sup>61</sup> *Uṣūl*, p. 48, and *Farg*, p. 317.

<sup>62</sup> *Uṣūl*, pp. 42 and 56 f.

<sup>63</sup> *Uṣūl*, p. 56 and K. *al-Masā'il*, p. 43.

<sup>64</sup> *Uṣūl*, p. 57, and *Maq.*, pp. 310 and 570.

<sup>65</sup> *Uṣūl*, p. 38. Cf. on transmission *Iqtisād*, p. 16.

<sup>66</sup> Contemporary of Abu'l-Hudhayl and al-Nazzām, who held a kindred view of Nature ('Tab') with him. Cf. *Munia*, pp. 31–2.

<sup>67</sup> *Maq.*, p. 325.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. *Farg*, p. 138. Mu'ammār is also said by Baghdādī to have believed in an infinite number of accidents which are caused by the body's Nature ('Tab') rather than by God. Ibid., p. 137; cf. also K. *al-Intiṣār*, pp. 53–4.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *Farg*, p. 121; *Maq.*, p. 324 f.

<sup>70</sup> *Maq.*, p. 324.

<sup>71</sup> It might be noted here that this is the same difficulty Heisenberg's Principle of Indeterminacy raises concerning the 'Electron.'

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *Milal*, pp. 38–9.

<sup>73</sup> *Maq.*, p. 321. His main point being that the upper is faster than the lower part; which can only be explained on the assumption that a point on the circumference of the upper tier overtakes or skips (*tafara*) certain points, so to speak.

<sup>74</sup> *Maq.*, p. 321.

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<sup>75</sup> *Maq.*, p. 322.

<sup>76</sup> *Uṣūl*, p. 40.

<sup>77</sup> *Farg.*, p. 144. Abu'l-Hudhayl, however, denied that motion and rest were 'modi.' *Maq.*, p. 355, and *Uṣūl*, p. 41.

<sup>78</sup> *Farg.*, p. 145, and *Maq.*, p. 355.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. *Tamhīd*, p. 42.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *Maq.*, p. 370.

<sup>81</sup> *Uṣūl*, p. 53; al-Ash'arī adds Abul-Qāsim al-Balkhī (d. 931), a Mu'tazilite, and others. *Maq.*, p. 358.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. *Muslim World*, April 1953, for a discussion of this question by the author.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. *Maq.*, pp. 358-9, and *Uṣūl*, pp. 50-1. It is noteworthy that the Karraimites, the leading anthropomorphists of Islam, held that all the accidents were durable and that their annihilation, like their production, depended upon God's direct 'fiat.' *Uṣūl*, p. 50.

<sup>84</sup> *Uṣūl*, pp. 51-2.

<sup>85</sup> 'Wujūd' corresponds to being. Strictly therefore 'ḥudūth' corresponds to 'coming into being.'

<sup>86</sup> On 'ḥudūth,' cf. *Uṣūl*, pp. 55 ff. 'Baqā' is created in the substance in its second state, according to the Ash'arites (*ibid.*, pp. 42 and 56). The Ash'arites generally, Abu'l-Hudhayl, Mu'ammar, Bishr, Hishām al-Fuwāṭī and al-Kā'bī are said to have recognized that duration was an accident or 'm'ana.' Al-Nazzām, al-Jubā'ī his son Abū Hāshim, and others did not. Al-Bāqilānī and al-Juwainī are the two notable Ash'arite exceptions—cf. *K. al-Araba'in*, p. 185.

<sup>87</sup> *Uṣūl*, pp. 45 and 67.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *K. al-Araba'in*, p. 185.

<sup>90</sup> *Uṣūl*, pp. 67 and 45.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>92</sup> *Guide*, p. 111b.

<sup>93</sup> As noted by Maimonides, loc. cit.

<sup>94</sup> *Farg.*, p. 317, and *Maq.*, pp. 366-7.

<sup>95</sup> *Farg.*, pp. 183 and 169; *Uṣūl*, p. 67, and *Maq.*, p. 368.

<sup>96</sup> *Uṣūl*, p. 66, and *Farg.*, p. 161.

<sup>97</sup> This is the generally accepted account. Cf. *Milal*, p. 30, and *Farg.*, p. 94 f.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. *K. al-Intiṣār*, p. 126.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. *Milal*, p. 44.

<sup>100</sup> *Maq.*, pp. 401 and 403; *Farg.*, pp. 143, etc.; and *K. al-Intiṣār*, pp. 26 and 171.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. *Farg.*, loc. cit., and *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*, p. 377.

<sup>102</sup> *Maq.*, p. 402.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. *Nihāyat al-Iqdām*, p. 68 f., and *Iqtisād*, p. 42, where this argument is outlined. This argument is also found in al-Ash'arī's *K. al-Luma'*, Br. Mus. MS.

<sup>104</sup> The classical instance was that of a man who was killed by an arrow, which had been shot by an archer who died in the interval. Cf. *Maq.*, pp. 403, and *Uṣūl*, pp. 137, etc.

<sup>104</sup> According to al-Ash'arī (*Maq.*, p. 403), Abu'l-Hudhayl distinguished between 'what man causes or effects in himself' (*yaf'alu fī nafsihi*) and 'what

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he causes in other things.' The former, he held, was the cause of the latter. Will was stated by him to be one of the things man 'causes in himself.' Recognizing the will as the 'first principle' of action, the majority of the Mu'tazila (with the notable exception of al-Jubā'i) denied that the 'will had a will'—p. 419—or 'that it was generated,' p. 414; avoiding thus the *regressus ad infinitum*. But not so the Ash'arites, whose teaching is exemplified in al-Ghazālī, who relates the idea of choosing (ikhtiyār) to that of good (khaṣṣ), which he ascribes to God's agency. Cf. *Iḥiyā'*, IV, p. 219 f.

<sup>105</sup> Ṣāliḥ b. Ṣabīḥ b. 'Amr, who is reckoned by Shahrastānī among the later Kharijis (*Milal*, p. 103) as well as the *Murji'a* (p. 106), who were also Qadarites (sc. Mu'tazila): cp. *Farg*, p. 193, and *K. al-Munia*, p. 41.

<sup>106</sup> *Maq.*, p. 406; cf. also pp. 568–9.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 407. The latter question had a bearing on another fantastic view of Sāliḥ, his view of vision (al-ru'ya): cf. *Maq.*, p. 433.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 310.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 570; cf. also p. 310, and *Uṣūl*, p. 57.

<sup>110</sup> *Maq.*, p. 570—a view in which Ṣāliḥ likewise concurred.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 571.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 570 and 312.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 312–13 and 569; cf. also *Farg*, p. 111.

<sup>114</sup> The former in his view that God could create the 'accident of extinction,' in no substratum and thereby destroy the whole universe, *Farg*, p. 168, and *Uṣūl*, p. 67; the latter in his view that God's fiat (qauluhu kun) is an accident in no substratum, *Farg*, p. 108, and *Maq.*, p. 311.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. *Farg*, loc. cit.

<sup>116</sup> *Uṣūl*, pp. 137–8: cp. *Irshād*, pp. 131–3, and Ibn Hazm, *Fīṣal*, V, p. 59 f.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *The Repudiation of Causality by al-Ghaṣāṭī*

\* \* \*

I

#### CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSAL PRINCIPLE

The extreme Ash'arite emphasis on the omnipotence of God culminated, as we have seen, in the repudiation of the natural efficacy of 'secondary' agents, both animate and inanimate. The Ash'arite doctors considered hitherto, however, offer no justification for their repudiation of this efficacy, save the pious contention that its admission is incompatible with the fundamental Koranic thesis of God's sovereignty and uniqueness. The classical statement of this thesis is found in the Creed of al-Ash'arī (*al-Ibāna*), who sums up in a memorable passage this fundamentally Islamic conception of the unqualified omnipotence of Allah, who is the sole creator and master of everything; before whose will every other will must bend. 'We believe,' he writes, 'that God created everything by bidding it "Be" (*Kun*) . . . ; that nothing on earth, whether a fortune or a misfortune, comes to be save through God's will; that things exist through God's fiat; that no one can perform an act prior to its performance, or be independent of God or elude His knowledge . . . ; that there is no creator save God; and that the deeds of the creatures are created by Him and predestined by Him, as it is written: "He created you and your

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deeds’<sup>2</sup>; that the creatures can create nothing but are rather created themselves . . . ; that God has pleased to give it to the pious to obey Him, through His grace, His care, His reform and His guidance; as He has pleased to delude (adhalla) the impious by restraining from guiding them graciously . . . ; that God could reform the impious and convert them unto godliness, but for his fore-ordination that they shall be impious as He foreknew, leading them thus to perdition and blindness. (We believe) that good and evil are the outcome of God’s decree and fore-ordination and we profess faith in God’s decree and fore-ordination (*qadā’ wa qadar*): good or evil, auspicious or ominous, and know that what has failed to attain us could not have attained us and what has befallen us could not have failed to attain us, and that creatures are unable to benefit or injure themselves, save through God’s pleasure.<sup>3</sup>

The author who was destined to proceed beyond this stage of mere theological affirmation and offer a critical analysis of causality, which resulted in its abrogation as a theoretical principle, was al-Ghazālī, who died in 1111. Al-Ghazālī, more than any of his Ash‘arite predecessors, was qualified for the conduct of this attack on one of the cardinal presuppositions of Aristotelianism, in the name of the omnipotence of Allah. For prior to his conversion, as he tells us in his autobiography,<sup>4</sup> he devoted himself assiduously to the study of Greek philosophy and attained such a degree of proficiency in it that he produced one of the best compendia of Aristotelianism in Arabic, the *Intentions of the Philosophers*. This compendium translated into Latin by Dominicus Gundissalinus as early as 1145<sup>5</sup> under the title *Logica et philosophia Alghazalis Arabis*, represented such a faithful exposition of Aristotelianism that its author was reckoned, by the Latin scholastics, a genuine Peripatetic, who is repeatedly mentioned by Roger Bacon, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas side by side with the two great representatives of Arab Aristotelianism: Avicenna and Averroës.<sup>6</sup> This shrewd analysis of the concept of causality constitutes the main theme of the 17th question of his major refutation of Greek philosophy,

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as interpreted mainly by the two Arab Aristotelians: al-Farābī (d. 950) and Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037): the *Collapse of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*). The radical charge which al-Ghazālī levels against the Aristotelian philosophers is the adherence to a deterministic world-view, which does not admit of the possibility of the heterogeneous incursion into the natural process of the supernatural and extraordinary. The eternity and perpetuity of the world, the negation of the possibility of creation *ex nihilo*, of God's knowledge of singulars, of the rational possibility of miracle, and finally, the negation of the possibility of corporeal resurrection—all these errors betray in the judgment of al-Ghazālī, the reluctance of these Peripatetics to admit the reality of a supernatural order at the head of which stands a sovereign agent capable of effecting the designs of His providence imperiously and miraculously.

In the present discussion we will confine ourselves to the examination of al-Ghazālī's treatment of one aspect of the problem considered here in its many ramifications. This is the problem of causality in its relation to divine power. Al-Ghazālī touches upon this problem in the course of his discussion of the 16th question of the *Tahāfut*,<sup>7</sup> wherein it is shown 'that the thesis (of the philosophers) regarding the knowledge of the "Heavenly Souls" of all contingent singulars in this world is gratuitous.' Here he expounds the claim of the philosophers that the 'Separate Intelligences' dispose the movements of the heavens and of the bodies in the 'Sublunar World' through the mediacy of the 'Souls of the Heavens'; which effect the particular movements of the Spheres through their particular knowledge and particular volition of these movements, as distinct from the universal knowledge imparted to them by the 'Separate Intelligences'.<sup>8</sup> This neo-Platonic theory, al-Ghazālī argues, leads inevitably to a deterministic scheme of things, inasmuch as it refers the movements of the heavens and the events of nature to the knowledge and volition of the celestial agents. The Philosophers, in fact, teach that the 'Souls of the Heavens,' through their knowledge of the particular movements in question, arrive at the

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knowledge of all earthly contingent events, as necessarily ensuing upon their (own) original knowledge and will meditately or immediately. The logical consequence of this doctrine is that ‘every event has a contingent cause, until we traverse the series and arrive at the “eternal heavenly movement,” whereof one part is the cause of the other. Hence the series of causes and effects terminates in the particular heavenly movements; since the representation of these movements amounts to a representation of their consequences and the consequences of these consequences, etc., until the end of the series.’<sup>9</sup> The Philosophers, al-Ghazālī pursues the argument, seek to account through this theory of determined heavenly movements for the possibility of prognostication in a purely naturalistic way, whereby prophesies and dreams are ascribed to the soul’s keenness (*ḥads*) in unravelling the secrets of the heavenly movements.<sup>10</sup> The Philosophers, however, he adds, are incapable of repudiating the teaching of revealed religion that prophecies and dreams are the outcome of divine revelation, either directly or through the agency of the angels. In addition, this account does not tally with the explicit teaching of revealed theology (*Shar’*) concerning the ‘Primordial Codex’ (*al-Lauh al-Mahfūz*)<sup>11</sup> and the Pen<sup>12</sup> which the Philosophers identify with the cogitations of the Intelligences; or with the possibility of miracle, as a definite departure from the habitual course of events. Indeed that the imaginative, intellective and practical faculties—on the assumption of the Philosophers themselves,<sup>13</sup>—can attain to such a degree of acuteness that the prophet (or even the common man) is capable of prognostication or of miraculous deeds, through ‘complicity with the elements’ is not to be denied. ‘What we deny,’ writes al-Ghazālī, ‘is (the Philosophers’) contention that (the miraculous power of the prophets) is confined to these deeds; and their repudiation of the possibility of transmuting the stick into a snake and of the resuscitation of the dead, etc.’ ‘Thus we ought to treat of this question,’ he concludes, ‘in order to prove the possibility of miracles and for another reason: namely, the defence of the common belief of the Muslims concerning God’s power to do all things.’<sup>14</sup>

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With these introductory remarks, al-Ghazālī embarks upon a critical analysis of the principle of causality, with a view to determining its logical and metaphysical status. The problem that preoccupies him at the outset is the problem of the alleged necessity of the causal nexus. For if the chain of events in nature is determined by the movements of the heavenly bodies and the volition of the 'celestial souls' (*an-Nufūs as-Samāwiyyah*), on the one hand, or the irrevocable laws of generation and corruption, on the other—as the Peripatetics contend—then the philosopher has one and only one recourse, viz.: the admission of the inexorable necessity of the mechanism of nature, and with it, the autonomy of the cosmic life face to face with the providence of the Almighty.

Yet, at this very point, al-Ghazālī puts in a fully legitimate question: 'What, indeed, inheres in the notion of necessity, in its relation to the logical and the ontological realms? And what are the grounds of its predication of the ontological order, even were its legitimacy in the logical order to be conceded?

'The correlation between what is wont to be taken as cause and what is wont to be taken as effect,' he writes at the opening page of Q. 17, 'is not necessary according to us. For any two entities, neither of which is the other, nor the affirmation or the negation of which is implied in the affirmation or the negation of the other, are not necessary concomitants as regards the existence or inexistence of one or the other; like the quenching of thirst and drinking, satiety and eating, combustion and contact with fire, etc.'<sup>15</sup>

It will be noted here that al-Ghazālī encounters no difficulty in admitting readily the legitimacy of the notion of necessity, in the sphere of mere logical relations. The notion of necessity ought, in fact, to be confined to the logical categories of identity, implication and disjunction. Outside this sphere of purely logical relations necessity has absolutely no scope. The genesis of this notion in the world of contingent, natural relationships is of a purely psychological nature, as Hume later maintained. It is the outcome of a mere psychological habit which the philosophers mistake for

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imperative, logical necessity. Yet of this alleged necessity they have none but an empirical proof: viz.: recourse to experience. Experience, however, proves merely that the effect ‘occurs with the cause and not *through* it’<sup>16</sup> (*cum se, non per se*: ‘indahu lâ bihi'). Philosophy must content itself, therefore, with the notion of *logical* necessity, as rationally admissible. *Causal* necessity as a predicate of the order of being must be abandoned as irrational and inadmissible. For in the order of being, unlike the order of thought, we are not dealing with laws in the strict sense, but merely with contingent processes the terms of which are extrinsic to each other and, therefore, unrelated except in the consciousness of the subject observing them.

It is to the credit of al-Ghazâlî that he concedes, at least, the reality of logical necessity. The precise status of this necessity in al-Ghazâlî’s epistemology need not detain us here. So much at least is certain: al-Ghazâlî asserts, whenever the problem of causality recurs in his works, that necessity is admissible only where a logical absurdity is involved. Thus in the last pages of Q. 17 of *Tahâfut*, he finds himself driven to concede that God’s power does not extend to impossibles, as some of the Mutakallims maintained,<sup>17</sup> on the ground of the inherent necessity of the logical relationship between the conditioned and its condition. The same concession is made in the *Iqtisâd*, in the course of the discussion of God’s power in its relation to natural operations. Here al-Ghazâlî is discussing the notion of production or generation (*tawullud*), enshrined by the Mu’tazilites and the Peripatetics as a fundamental *tenet*.<sup>18</sup> In criticizing this notion al-Ghazâlî argues that generation is reducible upon examination to the notion of ‘issuing forth’<sup>19</sup>—as the ‘child is said to issue forth (*yakhruj*) from its mother’s womb.’ Whenever, therefore, there is no container and no contained, the notion of a cause ‘producing or generating’ an effect is unintelligible. Nor can it be urged that such ‘production’ of the effect by the cause is attested by experience; since all that experience attests is that it is ‘contemporaneous with it only.’<sup>20</sup>

If the notion of generation in this crude materialistic guise is

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discarded then presumably all activity must be referred unconditionally to God. God's power being the sufficient reason of every natural operation the thesis that 'God could create the movement of the hand without that of the ring, . . . and could create will without knowledge and knowledge without life,' etc.<sup>21</sup>—despite the fact that the former term stands to the latter in each case as the condition to the conditioned—would receive the semblance of plausibility. To this al-Ghazālī retorts by invoking the principle of necessary conditional correlation and by limiting the scope of power to the sphere of possibility only. Even God's power does not extend to what involves contradiction in itself, he contends, because this is logically impossible.

The claim that God can create knowledge in the inanimate and will in the irrational (as some Mutakallims held) or assign two objects to the same space is absurd, because it violates both principles.<sup>22</sup> Whenever, on the other hand, there is no necessary conditional correlation between two entities, nor does the negation of their interrelation involve any logical contradiction, we can in no way assert that they are necessary correlates; and of this order is the principle of causality.<sup>23</sup>

In fact, there exist according to al-Ghazālī three necessary modes of relationship between any two terms or entities only:

1. The relationship of reciprocity—according to which the negation of the one implies necessarily the negation of the other: e.g. right and left, above and below.

2. The relation of antecedence and consequence—as in the relation of the conditioned to its condition. Here, too, the negation of the antecedent entails the negation of the consequent; 'so that if we find the knowledge of the person follow upon his life and his will upon his knowledge,' we conclude necessarily 'that the assumption of the privation of life leads to the privation (*intifā'*) of knowledge and the assumption of the negation of knowledge to the privation of will. This is described as the condition, viz. that which is indispensable for the existence of the object, but only in the sense that the existence of the object is not *through* it but *with it* and alongside it.'<sup>24</sup>

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3. The relation of cause and effect—whereby the negation of the cause entails the negation of the effect, only when the effect has one cause. Assuming, however, that the effect has *more* than one cause, then it follows that the negation of *all* the causes would lead to the negation of the effect, but not the negation of any one single cause.

The validity of this causal relationship, as necessarily imperative, al-Ghazālī goes on to argue, rests on the validity of two prior suppositions: (*a*) The *a priori* admission of the principle of causality, as applicable to any real sequence under examination—which is in question; and (*b*) The exhaustive knowledge of the series of causes operating in that sequence.<sup>25</sup>

It will be readily perceived that al-Ghazālī has restated here the position maintained in the *Tahāfut*, according to which a necessary relationship exists only between logical concepts, but not between real entities. The principle of causality, as the third class of relationships shows, is necessary only on the assumption of a necessary causal law, universally valid (and this is the point at issue)—or on the assumption of a complete knowledge of all the causes operating in any given natural process. Al-Ghazālī discounts emphatically the latter possibility, in the first alternative (al-maqām al-awwal) of Q. 17—on the basis of a theory of ‘Occult causes’ eluding the discernment of human sensibility.<sup>26</sup> There remains, therefore, two modes of necessary relationship which are logically valid: logical implication and conditional correlation. The transition from these two categories to the category of causality, as an ontological principle—as we have seen, is illegitimate, as is all transition from the order of thought to the order of being.

Now if it is maintained, in opposition to this, that it is the natural agent (e.g. fire) which is the cause of the effect following upon it (i.e. combustion), it will be retorted that the only evidence which can be adduced in the support of this claim is the perception of the consequence of combustion upon lighting, of satiety upon nutrition, of death upon the cutting of the throat. Experience (al-mushāhadah), however, does not prove that the latter event

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is the *cause* of the former, but only that it occurs *with* it;<sup>27</sup> and from a particular observation at any rate (induction) a universal inference cannot be made.<sup>28</sup> In view of the incapacity of sense-perception to be exhaustive, it can be further maintained that 'there might exist in the "principles of things" certain agents and causes from which these events emanate whenever they chance to meet, and which are so constant that we are unable to discern their presence, owing to the fact that they do not perish or recede, like movable bodies, so that we might be able to discern their reality by discerning the difference (between their existence and non-existence).'<sup>29</sup> This hypothesis is actually conceded by the authorities among the Philosophers (*Muhaqqiqūhum*), who teach that things receive their specific qualities and forms from the *Dator formarum*,<sup>30</sup> once they are naturally disposed for their reception.

To proceed beyond the hypothetical possibility of such an occult 'agent' it is necessary to prove:

*First*, the insufficiency of the empirical causal series, as given in experience, to account for the natural effect under consideration.

*Second*, the actual reality of an occult cause (or of a series of such causes) to which the natural effect can be positively referred.

To allow for the former condition we need only recall the Ash'arite thesis concerning the complete inertness of natural agents, which al-Ghazālī tacitly endorses;<sup>31</sup> as to the latter condition, it too is allowed for in the parallel Ash'arite thesis that this Agent is actually God, who operates in all the phenomena of nature, as we have seen. Al-Ghazālī, however, adds point to this thesis by arguing that this Agent is invisible not because He is not, but rather because, like the sun, His superabundant light is so dazzling that only the privileged few can fix their gaze upon Him. These 'visionaries,' unlike the common run of men, are not deceived by the appearances of things, so as to presume to see the forms of existing things as subsisting in themselves. Indeed, they see nothing save God's Face in all things. Thus it is 'that they see nothing but God is seen with it. Some of them even go the length of saying: we have seen nothing but God was

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seen before it. For, some of them see things through Him, others . . . see Him through things . . . because He is indissolubly united to all things, and like the light, makes all things visible.<sup>32</sup>

The existence of a primary cause, distinct from secondary agents, might be conceded by the opponent without surrendering the deterministic thesis. The opponent, in fact, might argue that the dispositions of things for the reception of the 'Forms' emanating from the 'Primary Cause' (or Causes) are determined by the specific natures of these agents which are the substrata (*sing.* *mahall*) of generation and corruption. The mode of emanation of the 'Forms' from these Primary Causes, being determined by their intellectual nature and the specific dispositions of the substrata being immutable, it follows that a natural agent must needs act in a uniform and determinate manner, whenever the Primary Cause impinges upon it.<sup>33</sup>

To rebut this argument of neo-Platonic emanationism, al-Ghazālī adopts two courses. The first consists in showing that the mode of activity of the Primary Cause (or Causes) in question, contrary to the gratuitous assumption of the neo-Platonists, belongs to the category of voluntary activity. The issue between voluntary and necessary activity, as regards God, represents the substance of the Third Disputation of the *Tahāfut*. Here al-Ghazālī launches a vehement attack on the deterministic doctrine of emanation, as professed by the neo-Platonists.<sup>34</sup> Their verbal avowal of creation, he argues, is mere dissimulation and duplicity. For from their teaching it follows that God, being divested of all attributes, volitional activity is impredicable of Him, so that whatever emanates from Him emanates through a mode of absolute necessity, 'as the effect ensues necessarily upon the cause . . . the shade upon the figure and light upon the sun.'<sup>35</sup> Whenever, therefore, they speak of God as the Creator (*Khāliq*) or the Demiurge (*Šāni'*) they are only speaking figuratively. For any adequate notion of creation or of activity is unintelligible except in the context of the notions of knowledge and will.<sup>36</sup> To speak of God, therefore, in the manner of the Philosophers, as the necessary cause of the universe, or rather the logical ground

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'without which the existence of the universe cannot be conceived,'<sup>37</sup> is to miss the import of creation altogether—and is in fact a mere subterfuge whereby the Philosophers seek to appease the orthodox. This circumstance is confirmed by the specious theory of the eternity of the world, which is incompatible with the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*; or the predication of volitional activity of God. For according to our belief, al-Ghazālī writes, 'Production (ihdāth) is the translation of an object from non-being to being'<sup>38</sup>—a doctrine which is incompatible with the notion of an eternally subsisting universe.

As a final evidence of the disavowal of creation by the Philosophers, one can adduce their very monistic metaphysics. For according to them the One can give rise only to the one—the multiplicity of created things being the final stage in a progressive series of emanations. To give the semblance of verisimilitude to this preposterous theory, the neo-Platonists invent a fantastic emanationist scheme, at the head of which stands the One, who knows himself and thereby gives rise to the whole series of Separate Intelligences. Unlike the One, the First of these Separate Intelligences, they argue, cogitates the One as the supreme source of perfection, and cogitates itself as necessary through the One from which it emanates, and as contingent through its own being. The former act of self-cogitation gives rise to the Second Intelligence, the latter to the soul of the first planetary sphere and its body respectively. Yet upon close scrutiny this fantastic emanationist scheme crumbles like a baseless construction, because it rests on no other ground save the idle play of the imagination.<sup>39</sup> The only recourse left before the conscientious searcher, al-Ghazālī pursues the argument, is to accept the teaching of revealed religion respecting a free and omnipotent Agent 'Who executes whatever He pleases and decrees as He wishes; Creator of things in their distinctions and identity in accordance with His sheer fiat'<sup>40</sup>—a teaching enunciated by the Prophets and corroborated by their miraculous deeds. The Philosophers had better accept 'these precepts on the authority of the prophets . . . and leave aside queries about quantities,

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qualities and quiddities, for this is beyond the grasp of human faculties. (Was it not on this account that the Prophet (Muhammad) enjoined): "Ponder God's creation but do not enquire into His essence—(dhāt)"?<sup>41</sup>

Yet al-Ghazālī is not unaware that the admission of the arbitrary fiat of the Creator as the sole ground of all operations in nature entails a whole host of serious absurdities. For if we let the notion of a necessary causal sequence drop and refer all operations to the caprice of the Creator, then knowledge would lose all its stringency and the configurations of things would be shorn of any recognizable Natures. In the midst of this fanciful world, where everything is shorn of the predicates of constancy or necessity, man is reduced to the impossibility of making any positive assertions about things or even of presuming to recognize the identity of anything that is.<sup>42</sup>

In grappling with this problem, al-Ghazālī finds himself driven in perfect consequence with the initial assumptions of his theistic occasionalism, to consent to bear the whole burden of this scepticism. The power of God is to be defined, according to him, as an absolute faculty of reference to all possibles, and since there is clearly no limit to the range of possibilities then there is no limit to the scope of this faculty.<sup>43</sup> It would seem, however, that the allegedly unlimited range of possibility must give way, upon closer scrutiny, to the law of contradiction. For obviously whatever involves any logical contradiction is impossible even for divine power. This al-Ghazālī concedes without abandoning, however, the notion of infinite possibility or acknowledging therein any rational limitation on divine power. The revised notion of possibility becomes thus coterminous with that of logical consistency.<sup>44</sup> Whatever involves logical contradiction must be dismissed as being outside the sphere of possibility. Such, as we have seen, is the whole class of entities whose correlation involves logical necessity or conditional correlation.<sup>45</sup> The relationship between a natural agent and a natural patient falls outside these two categories, as we have shown previously. From the standpoint of God's infinite power every real entity is in effect

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contingent and therefore possible. The intellect cannot postulate a necessary coincidence between the existence of the possible and our consciousness of this existence, since God can create in us knowledge of the inexistence of the possible.<sup>46</sup> No *a priori* judgment can therefore be enunciated with respect to the modality of the possible. In its objective reality, and consequently in relation to the intellect, the possible stands in a position of complete indeterminateness. The ground of its modal determination lies in the free activity of God, with whom alone rests the decree to bring it into being or withhold from it the predicate of actuality. Thus does it come about that God might decree that a phenomenon shall depart from its natural course, without violence to the contingent, ontological order in which this departure is effected. Such a departure need not, further, entail any violence to our knowledge of the phenomenon in question, because God could infuse in us, simultaneously with the event, the knowledge corresponding to the modal determination He has decreed that it should receive since all eternity.<sup>47</sup>

Throughout this whole polemic against the Peripatetics, al-Ghazālī has obviously been arguing at a disadvantage. For he has been fighting the Peripatetic philosophers on their own territory. This he keenly perceives is bound to entail metaphysical concessions which he is only too reluctant to make. The emanationist scheme of the Philosophers, their doctrine of elemental disposition, their theory regarding the primary cause or *Dator Formarum*, their illuminationist hypotheses, and their affirmation of a necessary causal nexus in nature are fundamentally gratuitous and baseless. The critical examination of these questions might help to reveal to the uninstructed the incoherence of their systems and the inconclusiveness of their arguments against the rational possibility of miracle. But this procedure is fraught with dangers and misconceptions which could be avoided if these metaphysical phantasies were allowed to go.

At this juncture, al-Ghazālī casts off the ‘metaphysical mask’ he has worn throughout this whole dialectical conflict with the

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Philosophers. At one stroke he now casts to the wind all metaphysical structures and all metaphysical assumptions. Once more his vision is fixed upon the focal centre of absolute divine power. To rationalize the possibility of miracle in a conclusive manner the theologian, unlike the metaphysician, needs none save this 'magic rod' of divine omnipotence; and therein lay his advantage. Accordingly al-Ghazālī turns to this 'magic rod' as a final resort. It might be conceded, he argues, that natural agents (e.g. fire) are endowed with certain specific properties. It might be conceded too that the same agent operates always in the same manner. We maintain, however, he adds, that the same agent might impinge upon a patient in such a way that the latter is left entirely intact, by reason of the intervention of God, either directly or through the agency of the angels, whereby the specific nature of the patient is altered or the specific operation of the agent is hindered. Thus fire might seem to touch the body of a prophet<sup>48</sup> without causing any injury thereto. Similarly the intermediary terms of the causal sequence, which represents the series of conditions culminating in the emergence of a natural effect throughout a given time-process, might be abolished; and yet God might still decree that the effect shall ensue upon the first term of the series and outside the temporal process altogether. The miraculous intervention of God would amount thus to a mere relaxation of the time-process to a minimal degree—a circumstance which is not altogether unreasonable; since we can conceive of a progressive shortening of the period in which an event comes to pass, without jeopardy to the actual unfolding of the process culminating in this event.<sup>49</sup>

This assumption is not less plausible than the Peripatetic hypothesis according to which quasi-miraculous deeds are attributed to the soul, and notably to the soul of the prophet. The Philosophers teach, in point of fact, that the soul can bring about extraordinary phenomena which are outside the ken of the generality of men, such as rain, lightning and earthquakes, through complicity with the elements.<sup>50</sup> Although this hypothesis is philosophically plausible, it fails to take account of the untold

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wonders of nature and the unsearchable depths of God's creative resources. For whoever catches a glimpse of God's boundless power cannot but perceive the complete verisimilitude of prophetic miracles. The Philosophers themselves explain that the various natural processes, like the processes of germination and animal generation, depend upon the propitious disposition of the elements on the one hand, and upon the emanation of the specific and appropriate Forms from the Primary Causes,<sup>51</sup> when that emanation has become seasonable owing to the timely movements of the heavens. Yet by teaching that the determination of the modes and seasons of the interaction of these two factors transcends human faculties, the Philosophers open the way for the possibility of the most extraordinary of natural wonders. In fact, the 'elemental dispositions of things' are so mysterious that the adepts of sorcery, alchemy and astrology have achieved wellnigh miraculous deeds, through the crafty manipulation of the elements under the propitious auspices of the stars.<sup>52</sup> Thus the mind is naturally led to ask: 'Are we warranted in denying the possibility of the propitious dispositions of certain bodies, whereby they are capable of transmutability (from one phase to another) in the shortest conceivable time; so as to become disposed for the reception of a Form to which they were not formerly disposed and thus give rise to a miracle—it being granted that the principles of elemental dispositions are inscrutable and their multitudes inexhaustible?'<sup>53</sup> The hidden secrets of nature and of God's wonders leave ample scope in nature, in fact, for the admission of the possibility of the most miraculous phenomena which we are unable to grasp. To call the rational possibility of miracle into question, therefore, is nothing short of sheer obduracy.<sup>54</sup>

Here, it will be noticed, al-Ghazālī lapses once more into his initial position of partial agnosticism, professing thereby to save the conclusive reality of miracle. By casting upon the natural process the cloak of mystery, he professes to give a rational account of the surreptitious and miraculous incursion of the Divinity into the domain of nature. The 'rationalization' of miracle has thus been achieved through a singular paradox:

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the quest of the rational grounds of miracle in the dark recesses of the irrational and the occult.

### II

#### THE DIVINE PREROGATIVES OF SOVEREIGNTY AND OMNIPOTENCE

The critical analysis of the principle of causality and its deterministic implications has thus led al-Ghazālī to the negation of any mode of necessary causal correlation in the interest of divine omnipotence.

True to the Ash'arite spirit of Orthodox Islam, al-Ghazālī asserts that God is the Sole Agent whose foremost and exclusive prerogative is unlimited and gratuitous activity. Outside this activity there is nothing but sheer inertness and passivity. Viewed in its totality, the metaphysical system of al-Ghazālī presents itself to the vision of the observer as a sidereal system, at the summit of which shines forth the infinite light of the Almighty devouring in its superabundance all things and reducing them to utter nullity. Being, as the exuberant store of all perfection, is the unique predicate of God outside whom there is only non-being and darkness. Power, wisdom, will and life are not ontological predicates of the Creator in which the creature participates, albeit in an imperfect and fragmentary manner; they are predicates of God alone, exclusively and pre-eminently. 'The picture of the universe,' as depicted by al-Ghazālī, writes Wensinck,<sup>55</sup> 'is of a different aspect.<sup>56</sup> Ghazālī does not see in existence anything save the Unique Being, who for some unknown reason has at one moment of eternity figured out and realized a world which possesses in itself neither existence nor the faculty for action. This conception of the world could be described as pantheism. In fact, this designation is altogether inappropriate. For if for pantheism all is God, for Ghazālī on the contrary, God is all. According to pantheism God does not exist except through the universe. According to Ghazālī the universe does not exist

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at all, God being the sole existent. The doctrine of Ghazālī is Semitic monotheism seen through the prism of neo-Platonism.'

It is this vision, this obsession,<sup>57</sup> with the uniqueness of God and His absolute sovereignty which leads al-Ghazālī to discourse at length on the total nullity of things when viewed in the perspective of God's infinity and uniqueness, in the *Niche of Lights*. At the highest stage of mystical vision, he writes, when the Truth of Truths is disclosed to their sight, 'the seers (al-'arifūn) rise from the plane of figures (majāz) to the pinnacle of reality . . . and perceive through direct vision (al-mushāhadah al-'iyāniyah) that there is nothing in being but God, and that everything is perishing save His face, not because it perishes at one moment of time, but because it is perishing eternally and everlasting, since it cannot be imagined otherwise. For everything other than God, when considered in itself, is absolute not-being; and when considered from the standpoint of the being which it receives from the First Truth is seen to be-not in itself, but only from the standpoint of the author of its being—so that the sole existent is God's Face. Everything thus has two faces: a face unto itself and a face unto God. With respect to its own face, it is not; with respect to God's face, it is. Therefore, nothing is, save God and His Face; and hence everything is transient eternally and everlasting, except His Face.'<sup>58</sup> Nor do these seers, al-Ghazālī goes on, 'have to await the last Day to hear God's call: "Whose is the sovereignty today—it is God's, the One and the Triumpher!"' Because this call dins endlessly in their ears. Nor still do they understand by this saying: God is greatest (Allāhu Akbar) that He is greater than others. God be exalted! There is no other being with Him, for Him to be greater than it. None has the rank of equality (al-ma'iayah) with Him but only that of posteriority (at-taba'iayah); indeed, none has being save through His Face—so that His Face alone is.<sup>59</sup>

In the *Iḥiyā* (Vol. IV), al-Ghazālī returns with the same insistence to this theme. The confession of God's uniqueness (*at-tauhīd*) is here described as comprising four gradational levels or stages:

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1. There is, first, the stage of verbal avowal of God's unity, without any awareness of its implications.
2. There is, second, the consent of the heart to the profession of the lips.
3. There is, third, the stage of the Elect (*al-Muqarrabūn*) 'who see intuitively through the light of Truth that the multiplicity of things derives entirely from the one source, which is the Unique, the Triumpher.'
4. And, finally, there is the stage of the Truthful (*al-Ṣiddiqūn*), 'who see only the One in the universe. It is this vision of the Truthful which the mystics call: "Extinction in Unity"' (*al-fanā' fi'l-tauḥid*).<sup>60</sup>

In the moral sphere, the total resignation of the will unto God (*tawakkul*)<sup>61</sup> can rest only on the last two stages. For at these stages man attains to a consciousness of God as the Sole Agent, from whom is all penury and all abundance, all fortune and all misfortune. When you have attained this stage, *al-Ghazālī* writes, 'you perceive that there is no agent but God; and that everything that is (whether a creature or a possession, a giving or a denying, death or life, poverty or wealth, etc. . . .) are to be referred to God as their unique source and author. Having grasped this you cease to direct your gaze to anyone else. Thus your hope, confidence and trust would be placed in Him, since He is the unique and exclusive Agent.'<sup>62</sup>

It is, therefore, not merely a sign of feeble faith for the believer to attribute activity to any agent other than God; it is the very definition of polytheism (*ishrāk*), the disavowal of the real uniqueness of God—a disavowal occasioned by the cunning insinuations of the Devil or by man's ignorance of God's hidden ways in executing His designs mysteriously and imperceptibly. Thus the believer in his ignorance and short-sightedness can be likened unto an ant, which perceiving the pen tracing its course on the paper imagines that the pen is the real cause of writing, and not the calligrapher who causes the movement of both the hand and the pen.<sup>63</sup>

Yet the paradoxical aspect of it is that, despite the ignorance of the uninitiated to the mystical mysteries, God is the most

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evident of things, of whom the whole creation tells overtly as its Sole Sovereign and Author. He is like the light which is imperceptible owing to the intensity of its luminosity. Therefore, its brilliance is best discerned through its privation, i.e. darkness. But of God's light there can be no setting and of His everlasting presence no recession. That is why it is only given to the Elect to discern the radiance of His light and to be utterly extinct therein. When these Elect have attained the stage at which 'they see the whole world as the workmanship of God and know it as the workmanship of God, and love it as the workmanship of God,' they would in effect 'be seeing, knowing and loving God alone.' And of them would it be truly said that they are real confessors of unity (*sing.* muwahhid), who see God alone and who are conscious of themselves only inasmuch as they are God's slaves.<sup>64</sup> Of these it is said: 'They are dead to themselves; and to them is the allusion made in the phrase: "We were through *we*; now that we are dead unto *we*, we are without *we*."'

Here the intellect—overwhelmed by this grandiloquent exaltation of the Creator to the unattainable altitudes of absolute transcendence and sovereignty and bewildered at this sense of awesome obsession with His uniqueness, as though in the grips of dread lest this uniqueness be challenged or gainsaid and in this way jeopardized—is led naturally to enquire: 'Wherein does al-Ghazālī find the specific predicate of God's uniqueness? In what depths of the abyss of God's inner life, that is to say, is the exclusive Godhead of the Almighty to be sought? It is a cardinal tenet of Ash'arism, to which al-Ghazālī subscribes, that in God there is will, wisdom, power and life. The determination of the manner in which these predicates inhere in God's essence and the controversy which raged in Ash'arite-Mu'tazilite circles over the distinctness of these attributes from God's essence, does not touch the positive *reality* of these attributes. Against the non-Attributists (al-Mu'attilah), the Mu'tazilites and the Peripatetic philosophers, the Ash'arite school taught that these attributes *exist* in God, *distinctly* from His essence; the modality of this distinctness being waived agnostically aside as rationally unknowable.'<sup>65</sup>

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Yet once this has been conceded, it remains legitimate to ask: In what relationship do these attributes of wisdom, will and life stand to each other in the theology of al-Ghazālī? The question becomes all the more disturbing when it is contended, in the manner of al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite doctors, that these attributes are distinct from God's essence.<sup>66</sup> For whoever affirms the identity of these attributes with God's essence may well be relieved of the burden of determining the organic relationship in which these attributes stand to one another; since for him the Almighty knows, will and acts through the same identical movement of self-unfoldment. But such is not the position of al-Ghazālī and of his spiritual Ash'arite forebears.

It might be suggested in answering the question proposed above that these attributes stand to each other in a position of equality of metaphysical moment. Despite the instability of such a position which threatens to introduce multiplicity into the unity of the Divine Being, it has at least the merit of conceding to God an 'ontological equipoise of self-subsistence.' It is, as we shall see later, an imperative requisite of any adequate conception of the inner life of God and of His ontological completeness and integrity, as it were; because in it God is seen in the light of the ontological perfection of His being. The temptation to subject God to the inexorable dialectic of monistic reduction is a grave temptation. Yet any theology which fails to do justice to the fulness of God's being, by stripping Him of the positive predicates of ontological perfection, finds itself worshipping in the temple of a semi-deity, in fact, of a false surrogate of the Deity, an idol and a scarecrow.

When we turn to al-Ghazālī's theology to see wherein the uniqueness of his all-wise and all-powerful God consists, we find ourselves face to face with a striking divinity—a divinity in whom the attribute of omnipotence has devoured all other attributes. We believe, he writes, in *Kitāb Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id*, 'that God the Almighty is living, omnipotent, sovereign, victorious; is free from imperfection and impotency and succumbs not to dormancy or slumber, and is not subject to extinction or

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death. That He is Lord of the worlds, visible and invisible; the Lord of majesty and sovereignty. His are dominion and victory, creation and ordination. Heaven is at the reach of His outstretched arm; and the Creation is subdued to His might. That His alone are the prerogatives of creation and authorship; production and invention. He fashioned the creatures and their deeds, and meted out their possessions and their terms (*sing. ajal*). Nothing ordained can liberate itself from His grip or wrest its freedom from the decrees of His power. Of His designs there is no count and to His knowledge there are no bounds.<sup>67</sup>

The contention of the Philosophers and the Mu'tazilah, that God's absolute might is conditioned by His wisdom and justice, is repudiated by al-Ghazālī as blasphemous. The arbitrariness of God's will and the absoluteness of His power are such, al-Ghazālī argues, that no limiting condition can be assigned to the operation of His power. Wisdom and justice have no scope where the decrees of His will are concerned. God can, in fact, exact the intolerable (*ma la yuṭāq*); torture the innocent without remuneration (*bila 'iwād*). He can even refrain from exacting righteousness or assign reward and punishment to righteousness and sin respectively. Since nothing devolves upon Him, whether His creatures be consigned to eternal bliss or eternal damnation, He needs not have regard to the fitting in their behalf (*ri'āyat al-aṣlah*). It is true He has commanded the Prophet to admonish and exhort; but whether men hearken unto these exhortations or not is a matter of complete indifference to Him. For it is upon themselves that they bring judgment.<sup>68</sup>

'Yet what becomes of God's wisdom and justice and its nominal affirmation by al-Ghazālī in the face of this naked and despotic sovereignty of the Almighty?' one might candidly ask at this juncture. There is in man's soul a deep-seated will-to-holiness which refuses to bend before injustice and tyranny even if perpetrated by God Himself. Whenever the alleged absoluteness of God's sovereignty and His total independence from every rational principle is vindicated, this will-to-holiness raises an indignant voice of censure, in the name of a no less absolute law

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of justice and righteousness to which the Almighty Himself is compelled to submit. And yet the dramatic aspect of the matter is that this will-to-holiness is docile to the point of meekness and utter self-effacement. The voice of censure it raises is not the rebellious outburst of the wicked and untamed will which refuses to abide by any transcendent law of righteousness. For the holy are meek and humble like children. Therefore they rejoice in nothing more than the peace of identifying themselves with the righteous will of the Almighty; but only because the name of the Almighty is 'Holy, God the Lord of Hosts.'

For al-Ghazālī, however, this rebellious disposition of man to question the authority and sovereignty of God is the outcome of the pernicious teaching of the Mu'tazilah who have 'imposed constraint upon God's acts.'<sup>69</sup> To speak of injustice in God is unintelligible. Justice and injustice are as impredicable of God as 'distraction of the wall and play of the wind.' Injustice is an intelligible concept only in a sphere where different wills might conflict or their order of precedence might be disturbed. Thus the acts of an agent are said to be unjust when he encroaches upon the domain of another or when he disobeys the injunction of a legitimate superior. But where is a domain to be found which is not God's? And where is the sovereign to whom it is given to command the Lord of lords?<sup>70</sup>

Nor is the Mu'tazilites' subjection of God to a 'law of Reason' in the name of His sovereign wisdom admissible either. For wisdom when predicated of God can only mean His 'knowledge of the order of things and the *power* to dispose them providentially.'<sup>71</sup> And in this notion there is nothing to vitiate the concept of God's arbitrary fiat and His power to do anything, however repugnant to man's moral consciousness.

Without undertaking here to examine the doctrine of al-Ghazālī, we cannot omit to observe how unreal is his admission of the notion of divine wisdom and divine justice. For in point of actual fact the attribute of divine wisdom, as conceived by al-Ghazālī is wholly reducible to the attribute of power: the two are indeed indistinguishable. The wisdom which he predicates of

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God is not the wisdom which the philosopher, in the manner of Aristotle, can describe as the beatitudinous act of God enjoying the contemplation of His essence and in which the highest manifestation of the notion of life is revealed.<sup>72</sup> Nor is it a mode of participation in this noblest and most godlike of the operations of the soul, which is the prerogative of those who are given to the contemplation of the Truth.<sup>73</sup> The wisdom which al-Ghazālī predicates of God is reducible to the notion of ‘practical cunning,’ the sheer craftsmanship of the ‘Deus Faber.’ Its definition is conceivable only in terms of power.<sup>74</sup>

The most striking aspect of this notion of divine wisdom, conceived as mere ‘practical cunning’ is that it leads to the impoverishment of the inner life of God. In fact, one is left at a loss in seeking to specify in its terms (as Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas do) the very notion of divine life. For what indeed can al-Ghazālī mean by predicating life (*hayāt*) of God, except this buoyant and aimless activity of a capricious despot who acts for the sheer pleasure of acting;<sup>75</sup> a Creator who brings forth into being myriads of creatures whose life and death, suffering and joy, are completely indifferent to Him; and yet—paradoxically enough—the knowledge of the most insignificant movement of the most insignificant of these creatures, al-Ghazālī adds, escapes not the vision or fore-ordination of this indifferent Creator!<sup>76</sup>

A further paradox is displayed to sight when we turn to al-Ghazālī’s conception of the cosmic order in its relation to this absolute omnipotence of the God-Despot of orthodox Islam. This is the paradox of the Mighty Creator producing a world of ghosts and shadows, an unreal and flimsy world which has no life and no energy in its bowels. Here the observer having hearkened with composure to the tale of God’s creative might, cannot help exclaiming: ‘The Almighty has travailed and brought forth lifeless corpses. He has conceived and, behold, His offsprings are ghosts and shadows!’ And this paradox, as we have seen, is the natural outcome of the Ash‘arite and Ghazālian conception of the inertness of being and the inefficacy of substance.

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### CHAPTER TWO

<sup>1</sup> *Koran*, 16: 42.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 37: 94.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibanah*, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Al-Munqidh*, p. 85. Al-Ghazālī's statement that he was able to master the philosophical sciences in two years, although he studied them in his spare time, must be taken, perhaps, with a grain of salt.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. A. Salman, *Arch. d'Hist. doctr. et Litt.*, X, 1935–6, p. 118.

<sup>6</sup> Cf., e.g., Albertus Magnus, *Opera Omnia*, Vol. 5—*De Anima*, III, 343; 344a; 353a, etc. Roger Bacon, *Opus Magnus*, London, 1900, Vol. II, pp. 170, 262, 263, etc. This historical confusion was due to the fact that the prologue, in which al-Ghazālī states that the *Intentions* (*Maqāsid*) was merely an exposition of Aristotelianism which he intended to refute in the *Collapse of the Philosophers* (*al-Tahāfut*)—did not accompany the Latin translation which the thirteenth-century scholastics consulted. Cf. D. Salman, loc. cit., pp. 103 ff., etc.

<sup>7</sup> Miguel Asin Palacios gives a Spanish translation of the text of question 17 of the *Tahāfut*, which represents the subject-matter of our discussion, as well as the latter part of question 16, which forms the prologue to question 17—in his *Algazel, dogmática, moral, ascética*—App. II, pp. 774–818.

An analytical account of the contents of *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* and *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* can be found in *Muséon*, years 1888 and 1889 (pp. 613–37; pp. 5–20), by A. F. Melren.

S. Munk is one of the first Orientalists to point out the importance of Al-Ghazālī's sceptical presuppositions in *Mélanges*, pp. 378–9.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Najāt*, Cairo, 1938, pp. 241, 300 and 258 f.

<sup>9</sup> *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, p. 257: cp. *al-Najāt*, 138–9.

In *Ihiyā*, Vol. I, p. 26, al-Ghazālī explains how astronomy can prove injurious to men's faith, by launching them upon the quest of causes of things other than God.

<sup>10</sup> Cp. *al-Najāt*, pp. 167 f., 248, 299 and 301.

<sup>11</sup> The original Codex which embodied the divine Word, since all eternity, and which was subsequently revealed in Koran—according to Islamic teaching. Cf. *Koran*, 85: 22 and 13: 39.

<sup>12</sup> *Koran* 96: 4.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Fi'l wa'l Infi'āl*, pp. 3 ff.

<sup>14</sup> *Tahāfut*, pp. 275–6.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 277.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 279.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Tahāfut*, p. 294.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 44f.

<sup>19</sup> *Iqtisād*, p. 45. The Arabic word for generation, *tawallud*, derives from the same root as begetting or giving birth, a linguistic fact which gives plausibility to al-Ghazālī's argument.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> *Iqtisād*, p. 45.

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<sup>22</sup> The same argument is set forth in *Iḥiyā*, IV, 220. On the teaching of the Mutakallims on this subject, cf. supra, p. 46.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Iqtisād*, pp. 45–6.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Ghazālī puts it in *Tahāfut*, p. 280.

<sup>27</sup> *Tahāfut*, p. 279.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 318–19.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 280.

<sup>30</sup> The dator formarum (ar. Wāhib al-Šuwar) is the Active Intellect, which in the neo-Platonic scheme confers ‘Forms’ on material things: cf. *al-Najāt*, pp. 281 and 148.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Iqtisād*, pp. 38–9 and 20–1, etc., which presuppose the acceptance of the metaphysics of ‘atoms’ and ‘accidents.’

<sup>32</sup> *Mishkāt*, p. 120; cf. infra, p. 72.

<sup>33</sup> *Tahāfut*, pp. 281–3.

<sup>34</sup> It is noteworthy here that Creative Determinism is rejected by Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theol.*, Ia, qu. 19, arts. 2 and 3, *S. cont. Gent.*, Bk. II, Chs. 23–4; Bk. I, Chs. 80–3; *De Potentia*, Q. III, art. 15) on grounds not unlike those on which al-Ghazālī rejects it. It is significant, however (and this is the issue which ultimately divides the Thomist and Ghazālian metaphysics), that Aquinas reserves a mode of determinism to the creative act of God, in the name of divine wisdom and love; and this is God’s necessary volition of His goodness—in and through which things are created.

<sup>35</sup> *Tahāfut*, pp. 96–7.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 96; cf. also pp. 100–3.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *al-Najāt*, pp. 273 ff. and 277.

The emanationist neo-Platonic scheme is rejected by al-Ghazālī on the grounds that it fails to account for multiplicity and composition in the universe and to prove the genuine unity of the One. Cf. *Tahāfut*, pp. 110–32.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 132. The relevance of this citation from Hadith, which recurs in the discussion of God’s attributes (*Tahāfut*, p. 180) in the same agnostic context, is to repudiate the demonstrability of the mode of creation and the manner in which the Divine Being chooses to unfold His will.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *Tahāfut*, pp. 283–5.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *Iqtisād*, p. 39.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *Tahāfut*, p. 293. The Thomist teaching on this question is similar to al-Ghazālī’s: cf. *S. Theol.*, Ia, qu. 25, art. 4; *S. cont. Gent.*, Bk. I, Ch. 84; Bk. II, Ch. 25; *De Potentia*, qu. I, arts. III and IV.

<sup>45</sup> *Tahāfut*, pp. 292–6. For the conflicting theories of the Mutakallims on this question, cf. supra.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Tahāfut*, p. 285.

<sup>47</sup> The instance which al-Ghazālī here cites is the instance of the uninstructed (al-‘āmmī) whose intuitive faculty might become so acute that he is able to

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partake of the 'prophetic sense' and the faculty of prognostication. Alluding to the Philosophers' admission of such a possibility, he argues that God might bring about that this should come to pass. The Philosophers' proviso that such *has not* actually occurred does not invalidate this claim since its logical possibility has been conceded. Cf. *Tahāfut*, p. 286.

It should be noted here that al-Ghazālī's theory of a contemporaneous creation of the event and the judgment relating thereto proves that his occasionalism is not limited to the natural, but extends also to the epistemological spheres. Note al-Ghazālī's own phrases: 'Created knowledge in us' and 'Created the knowledge in us' (*ibid.*, p. 285).

<sup>48</sup> The reference is to Abraham, who, according to the *Koran* (21: 68–70), was cast into the fire but came out uninjured.

<sup>49</sup> Al-Ghazālī illustrates this point by reference to the metamorphosis of the animal through the following phases:

Earth gives rise to vegetation; vegetation upon consumption by the animal to blood; blood to semen; semen to the animal. 'The normal process takes place throughout a given lapse of time,' he writes. 'The opponent cannot maintain that it is impossible for God to transmute matter through these phases in a shorter lapse of time. . . . Once it is conceded that a shorter duration is possible, there is no assignable limit to the shortest, so that these faculties (*sc.* of the natural elements) are speeded up in their operation and thus the miracle comes to pass.' *Tahāfut*, p. 288.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Tahāfut*, pp. 274–5, and *supra*, p. 18, note 13.

<sup>51</sup> *Tahāfut*, p. 290. The 'Primary Causes' are the Separate Intelligences or the Angels, of which the 'Dator Formarum' is here in question. Cf. *supra*, note 30.

<sup>52</sup> Al-Ghazālī cites here the example of sorcerers who have succeeded 'in combining the heavenly powers with the mineral properties' in such wise as to dispel snakes, scorpions and bugs from whole towns. *Ibid.*, p. 291.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.

<sup>55</sup> *La Pensée de Ghazālī*, p. 9.

<sup>56</sup> *Sc.* from the picture of God depicted by Muhammad, whereby God is presented as a 'superhuman personality dominating everything.' Loc. cit.

<sup>57</sup> Carra de Vaux writes (*Ghazālī*, p. 70):

'Sa pensée (Ghazālī) est dominée par la vision, presque l'obsession de la volonté divine, de cette volonté créatrice et toute puissante qui produit tout à son gré, au-dessous de laquelle il n'y a que fini et à laquelle on ne demande pas de raison ni de compte. C'est bien cette souveraine puissance que Gazali est habitué à reverer; le reste se rapetisse à ses yeux; l'immensité, la fécondité, l'antiquité de la matière ne l'impressionent plus.'

<sup>58</sup> *Mishkāt*, pp. 113–14.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *Iḥiyā'*, IV, p. 212.

<sup>61</sup> In *Ayyuha'l walad*, al-Ghazālī defines Tawakkul as complete resignation to God's will, and faith in the irrevocability of His decrees. Hypocrisy, on the

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other hand, is described as the 'glorification of creatures' and the belief that they are capable of bringing about misery or withholding it. Loc. cit., p. 40.

Similarly in *Iḥiyā* (IV, pp. 195–6), the highest stage of ascetism (*Zuhd*) is described as the 'turning of the heart' in its entirety to God, whereby the ascetic desires and seeks nothing save God, 'since to seek anything, other than God is a subtle form of polytheism.'

This interpretation of the cardinal moral-religious virtues in function of metaphysical-theological concepts is one instance of the great synthetic acumen of al-Ghazālī.

<sup>62</sup> *Iḥiyā*, IV, p. 213.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 214; cf. also Vol. I, p. 27, and *Guide*, Ch. 73, prop. 6.

<sup>64</sup> The light-imagery of God's all-pervasive presence in things and its undiscernibility owing to its dazzling brightness recurs in *Mishkāt*, pp. 119–20.

The same argument is re-stated in *Al-Qawā'id al-Asharah*, p. 97, and in *Iḥiyā*, I, p. 30.

<sup>65</sup> On al-Ash'arī's own teaching on 'divine attributes,' cf. *Ibānah*, pp. 54 ff.

For an account of Orthodox Ash'arite teaching in general on this question, cf. al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-Dīn*, pp. 88–93; also, Al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-Iqdām*, pp. 180 ff.

In *Milal*, al-Shahrastānī relates that al-Ash'arī was categorical that God's attributes subsist in Him. As to the mode of this subsistence, he positively leaned towards an agnostic view according to al-Shahrastānī: Ibid., p. 67, cf. also p. 65 where the doctrine of 'bilā kaifa' (or no queries) is referred to.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Q. VI of *Tahāfut* (pp. 163–72), where al-Ghazālī engages in a polemic against the Philosophers and the Mu'tazila over their doctrine of identity of essence and attributes in God. Also pp. 149–62. On his opting for an agnostic view, cf. pp. 180–1.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Vol. I of *Iḥiyā*, p. 79.

<sup>68</sup> This is the substance of the 'five contentions' which al-Ghazālī states dogmatically and emphatically as part of the orthodox creed in *Iqtisād* (pp. 73–9). The polemic is directed against the Mu'tazila.

<sup>69</sup> *Iqtisād*, p. 84.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 83. Cf. al-Ash'arī—*K. al-Luma'*, Ch. 7.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> *Met.*, Bk. XII, 7, 1072b–31.

<sup>73</sup> *Ethics*, Bk. X, 7, p. 1177b–31.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *Iqtisād*, p. 83.

<sup>75</sup> Al-Ghazālī is very critical of the Peripatetic conception of God as 'thought thinking itself' (*intellectus intelligens intellectum*), expounded in *Tahāfut*, pp. 154–5, and 173–4), because it entails a limitation of God's knowledge to the sphere of selfhood, and reduces Him to the status of the dead (p. 182).

The same difficulty of specifying the notion of divine life is encountered by Baghdādī in his attempt to state the Orthodox doctrine on this question, in purely 'negative' terms. Cf. *Uṣūl*, p. 105.

<sup>76</sup> The theme of God's all-circumscribing knowledge recurs very frequently in al-Ghazālī's works: cf., for instance, *Iḥiyā*, Vol. I, p. 79.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *The Averroist Rehabilitation of Causality*

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#### 1

#### AVERROËS AND MAIMONIDES IN THEIR POLEMIC AGAINST ASH'ARITE OCCASIONALISM

In the course of his polemic against Islamic Kalām, Maimonides levels two major charges against Ash'arite Occasionalism, the one epistemological, the other metaphysical. Ash'arite Occasionalism threatens, in the first place, to divest things of their specific properties and powers and to abolish their fixed reality, in its teaching that the relative fixity of these things is grounded in the arbitrary fiat of God. And, in the second place, it threatens to repudiate the possibility of any conclusive knowledge about things, whether inductive or deductive; in its repudiation of the trustworthiness of sense-experience and the stringency of deductions from the proper quiddities and genera of things.<sup>1</sup>

The debt of Maimonides to Averroës in the formulation of his critique of Ash'arite Occasionalism can be readily perceived by whoever peruses their respective anti-Ash'arite writings, however cursorily. This debt would not arouse any surprise when it is recalled that both authors were engaged in this anti-Ash'arite polemic for identical philosophic motives which resolve themselves, in the last analysis, into the vindication of the Aristotelian insight into the nature of knowledge as a necessary consequence of the causal relations of things.<sup>2</sup>

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Throughout the whole of *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, Averroës reiterates the charge of scepticism against the Ash'arites, on account of their repudiation of causality and the consequent occasionalist metaphysics they profess.<sup>3</sup> The full development of the Averroist thesis, however, is to be found in Question 17, where Averroës undertakes a thorough exposition of the nature of knowledge in terms of causality, in the course of his refutation of al-Ghazālī's arguments. The two theses around which the Averroist position revolves are the reality of causal operations as a datum of sense-experience, and the necessary concomitance of knowledge and causality. That the fate of knowledge is bound up with the fate of causality, he argues, is evident from the fact that the ultimate distinction between entities which are knowable in themselves and entities which are unknowable in themselves resolves itself, in the last analysis, into the distinction between entities whose causes can be assigned and entities whose causes cannot.<sup>4</sup> If we were to strip things of their specific powers we would dissolve everything into utter and undifferentiated identity and repudiate the notion of wisdom and design which underly their providential disposition.

'But what, in effect, is the justification of the alleged correlation between the "being" of things and their "active powers",' one might candidly ask at the outset. 'What metaphysical principle, that is to say, can be adduced in the substantiation of the claim that the activity of an entity is even relevant to its being?' Ash'arism claims that a thing is what it is by reason of God's decree at every stage in its life that it should be such. Similarly, whatever active powers are seen to emanate from it, they argue, are the manifestation of God's own direct intervention, rather than of any power intrinsic to it. Consequently, there is no 'internal relationship' between the being of an entity and its active operation; the only relationship in which these two terms stand to each other is that of contiguity or succession.<sup>5</sup> It is not the natural entity which acts when it is seen to act; it is rather God who acts through it. The notion of activity is totally irrelevant to the notion of a thing's 'being' or quiddity.

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The question here raised is, of course, a serious metaphysical question of which neither scepticism nor dogmatism can proffer an adequate answer. For both dogmatism and scepticism this question is an enigma; because neither a ready dogmatic, unreasoned answer nor a ready rejection of the possibility of a positive answer would do. The problem of secondary causality is, in the last analysis, no less and no more than this problem. For what indeed is the ground of the assumption that activity is grounded in the ontological structure of the real? And what metaphysical principle presides upon the allegedly necessary relationship between Being and Act?

The Peripatetic-Ash'arite controversy can be interpreted as an attempt to wrestle with this problem from two antithetical standpoints. If al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite theologians were unaware of this broad metaphysical formula of the problem, Maimonides and Averroës were certainly alive to its centrality in Aristotelian metaphysics. The summary, negative solution which al-Ghazālī gives to this problem represents a very naïve reading of the causal problem, in its relation to the more general problem of being and knowing. The affirmation of a necessary law of reciprocity between Being and Activity is grounded in the insight into the nature of Being itself: such a nature would remain hidden and mysterious unless Being were to utter itself, as it were, in outward activity. Now such an utterance, such a self-revelation, is not indifferent to the inward structure of Being; otherwise it would not be self-revelatory, because it would be identical in every case of outward activity. But this is contradicted by the testimony of sense-experience and is, in any case, incompatible with the notion of the irreducible diversity of things.

We cannot, of course, pursue at length this abstract speculation upon the problem of Being and Act in its general, metaphysical aspect. What the most elementary analysis of this problem shows is that Being and Act are somehow related to each other. The mode of this relationship, however, is here left unsettled. Now neither a negative nor an empirical account of this relationship, it can be shown *a priori*, is acceptable, because the Act clearly

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does not bespeak the Being in which it is rooted purely outwardly and, as it were, superficially; otherwise no qualitative distinction (i.e. distinction in point of depth) can be affirmed concerning beings outwardly similar or identical. A negative account is discounted, as we have seen, on the ground that Activity somehow bespeaks Being and utters it; otherwise no generic distinction (i.e. distinction in point of nature or identity) can be affirmed concerning any two beings, however much their respective activities might differ, since such activities are said to be irrelevant to the being in which they are rooted. But if neither a negative nor an empirical answer to the question at issue is acceptable, then we have demonstrated the reality of causality, as a positive principle of ontology—as a principle, that is to say, whose extraction is not empirical and whose scope is not purely physical but extends into the metaphysical realm.

We shall examine at length later the exact meaning which can be assigned to causality in an Act-Potency metaphysics, both in Averroës and in Aquinas. Yet even at this stage of the argument, the centrality of the Aristotelian notion of the Act is displayed to sight. For Averroës as for Aristotle, the Being of an entity is inextricably bound up with the Act through which it is constituted; that is, is posited in being.<sup>6</sup> If the notion of Act here envisaged were a univocal notion, as monistic pantheism holds, then the dialectic of oneness would be absolutely inexorable. Diversity and multiplicity would have no part in the ontological structure of the real, and the deceptive panorama of manifoldness, as the Eleatics taught, would be a fleeting mirage of absolute and abiding identity.<sup>7</sup> If, on the other hand, the Act is reduced to the status of contingency, the universe would become the demoniac stage of a whimsical and unpredictable Power. What clue, indeed, can reason have in this ‘chaotic’ world to the natures and definitions of things? Philosophy posits it as a self-evident maxim that things are what they are by reason of their specific quiddities and that these specific quiddities are revealed in the specific, causal operations pertaining to things.<sup>8</sup> And it is with this maxim that the possibility of definition and demonstration

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is bound up. This is tacitly admitted even by the Mutakallims themselves, who concede the existence of conditions which are necessary correlates of the conditioned; such as life in its correlation to knowledge, as the condition to the conditioned.<sup>9</sup> They, likewise, concede that things have necessary definitions and natures which can be employed as premisses in valid demonstrations; such as the premiss that design implies an intelligent designer, and teleology in nature implies knowledge on the part of its Author.<sup>10</sup> But the admission of the possibility of necessary demonstrations entails the possibility of necessary knowledge. And when the nature of rational knowledge is explored it is found to be reducible to knowledge of the causes underlying things. The very notion of reason or intellect whereby it differs from other noetic faculties (*qiwā mudrikah*) is reducible to the notion of cognizing (*idrāk*) things through their causes. ‘Thus to repudiate causes is to repudiate reason’ and with it science, since the adequate knowledge of things consists in the knowledge of their causes. In this repudiation of reason and science, nothing can hold its own, not even the contention of the sceptic who affirms this nihilistic position.<sup>11</sup>

The abolition of knowledge in this nihilistic way involves a further corollary of far-reaching consequence to Ash‘arite theology itself. The negation of the determinate and fixed properties of things, as we have seen in Maimonides, militates against the cardinal theological interests of the Ash‘arites: namely, the demonstration of the existence of God and the determination of His sovereign attributes. The contingent, occasionalist metaphysics propounded by the Ash‘arite doctors despoils the natural order of any fixity that might otherwise be ascribed to it. All natural processes are reduced to the status of contingent acts (*af‘ál ja’izah*)<sup>12</sup> of a capricious despot who disposes things in accordance with the sole decree of his capricious will.<sup>13</sup> It is apparent how in the perspective of this metaphysical theory, no positive verdict on reality can be pronounced, neither from the standpoint of the Creator nor from the standpoint of the creature. For in the latter case such a verdict would have no

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determinate and fixed object to which to correspond, since neither the identity of the object with itself nor its distinction from other things are safeguarded.<sup>14</sup> And in the former case, the capricious will of the Creator, which represents the sole norm of the ontological determination of things, would be totally impervious to human insight, since its course would be altogether inscrutable.<sup>15</sup>

Note here the disturbing consequence of this radical scepticism for Ash'arite theology itself. If the causal principle is devoid of stringency altogether, then the process of transition from the effect to the cause would be utterly unwarranted. The question would then arise: 'What, indeed, is the ground of the presumption that there exists a Sovereign Being Who stands to the universe in a position of causal relationship? What is the justification, that is to say, of the process of ascent from the creature to the Creator, were the causal nexus not presupposed and its absolute validity in this dual relationship between the Creator and the creature not conceded?' This is the most striking dilemma in which the Ash'arite dialectic is caught up. The Ash'arites begin by distinguishing two modes of activity: volitional and natural (*irādiyah* wa *tabī'iyyah*). From this they proceed to argue that all activity is ultimately referable to a free, living, knowing, powerful Agent, of whose hidden presence all effects in nature are the overt manifestation. For on the premisses of the Ash'arites, it is absurd to ascribe activity either to animate or inanimate, secondary agents.<sup>16</sup> But if activity is predicate neither of animate nor of inanimate agents, whence indeed do the Ash'arites deduce the notion of God as an Invisible Agent, who is the Sole Efficient Cause in all activity, natural and voluntary alike? Whence, that is to say, does the cosmological argument here employed, derive its stringency when the validity of the causal principle is repudiated with such dispatch?<sup>17</sup>

This, however, is not the only disturbing consequence of Ash'arite occasionalism. The repudiation of the causal principle leaves without the possibility of settlement the problem of God's attributes as well. The attributes of life and activity, on the argument of the Ash'arites, are as impredicable of the divine as

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of the human agents. For the former attribute is deducible from the latter, as its condition and ground. But the Ash'arites gainsay this very conditional relationship between activity and life in the visible agent; so that the presumption that life inheres in the Invisible Agent is wholly unwarranted.<sup>18</sup>

The Ash'arites and al-Ghazālī accuse the Peripatetics unjustly of duplicity in their view of divine activity.<sup>19</sup> For the notion of activity in a genuine sense, according to the Ash'arites and al-Ghazālī, is inseparable from the notion of will and consciousness. When activity is predicated of inanimate and unconscious agents in nature, it is then to be understood in a purely metaphorical or figurative sense ('alā sabil al majāz). The very distinction between voluntary and natural activity is, in fact, purely arbitrary. Only a willing conscious agent can be said to act.<sup>20</sup> But the Peripatetics repudiate the notion of will and freedom in God, so that their pretence of adhering to the doctrine of a volitional creative act on the part of God can only be interpreted as sheer duplicity and hypocrisy.<sup>21</sup>

This charge, Averroës retorts, rests upon a misconception of the Peripatetic notion of activity. The Ash'arites begin by stripping all creatures, animate and inanimate, of the predicates of activity and power, in the interest of absolute divine power and fore-ordination. In this manner, they believe, they can safeguard the transcendence of activity as the exclusive attribute of the Almighty. But instead of safeguarding the reality of transcendent divine activity, they naïvely succumb to the lure of anthropomorphic dialectic. No sooner the concept of activity has been banished from the cosmic sphere than it is allowed to creep surreptitiously into the sphere of transcendent, divine life. Yet neither in the cosmic sphere nor in the divine sphere is the legitimacy of this concept on the premisses of the Ash'arites safeguarded. The negation of its validity in the former renders suspect its genuineness in the latter. The ultimate issue of Ash'arite dialectic is that it has posited God 'as an eternal man' but only after it had stripped man of his positive ontological predicates and allowed him to vaporize into thin air—thus dissolving God

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and man, the analogue and the analogate, into sheer non-entities.<sup>22</sup> Thus the accusation of the Ash'arites rests upon a misconception of the Peripatetic notion of activity as predicated of God. The reality of divine activity ought to be retained but not at the cost of sacrificing cosmic activity and the reality of its autonomous life, lest this procedure should threaten to destroy the very reality of divine activity itself. Nor ought the self-evident distinction between natural and voluntary action to be abandoned.<sup>23</sup> For the mode of operation of natural agents is such that they always act in a uniform way; as in the case of heat which always generates heat, humidity which always generates humidity. Whereas voluntary agents act in diverse ways at diverse times, because their nature is ordered to contraries.<sup>24</sup> Now the Peripatetics refrain from ascribing either voluntary or natural activity to God, and that is what gives occasion to the Ash'arite accusation. Natural activity, according to the Peripatetics, is impredicable of God on two accounts: *First*, because natural activity is posited through a necessity in the voluntary agent from whose will it emanates and of whom it is the fulfilment.<sup>25</sup> But this would imply that divine activity is determined through the necessity of the divine essence and is independent of the divine will. *Second*, such activity would not be accompanied by consciousness, and it is a tenet of Peripatetic metaphysics that God's activity emanates consciously from Him. Voluntary activity, on the other hand, is impredicable of God, because the movement of volition implies a movement of desire in an imperfect agent who seeks the good as the term of his desire and wherein his will comes to rest. But this would posit 'passivity' (*infi'*ál) and change in God, and this is inadmissible.<sup>26</sup> Consequently knowledge and will ought to be predicated of God in a manner dissimilar (*lā tushbih*) to human or natural activity. The *mode* of this will and knowledge, however, remains totally incomprehensible because it transcends all modes of activity which we encounter in the domain of concrete existence.<sup>27</sup>

The negation of the principle of necessary concomitance of life and activity would thus invalidate the predicability of

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life to the Creator, inasmuch as no logical transition from the latter to the former concept, as its ground or condition, can be effected. Nor can any such transition from the concept of activity to the concept of wisdom be effected either; so that neither the teleological nor the cosmological arguments for the existence of God would be valid, because the middle term is wanting in both cases.<sup>28</sup> An order of being which is shorn of all necessary, ontological determinations can scarcely be said to manifest the wisdom and perfection of its author. If things could be otherwise than they actually are, then no reason can be assigned for the specific properties with which they are endowed. But this is to affirm that no order or design inheres in the created order, and consequently that no wisdom can be ascribed to its Author.<sup>29</sup> ‘Thus to abolish the necessity which inheres in the quantities, qualities and substrata of created things, as the Ash’arites contend with regard to creatures in their relation to the Creator, is to abolish the wisdom which is found in the Creator and the creatures, alike; so that every agent would be an author and every determinant a creator. And this is to abolish reason and wisdom.’<sup>30</sup>

Thus the necessity inhering in the ontological determinations of things has two parallel grounds. Considered from the standpoint of its Author, the universe is seen to be necessary through the necessity of divine wisdom. Considered from the standpoint of its own, intrinsic structure, it is seen to be necessary through the necessity of the generic natures and definitions of the entities constituting it.<sup>31</sup> To call this necessity into question or to presume that the specific properties of substances could have been otherwise, would amount to the abolition of all wisdom and knowledge.

It will be noticed here that both lines of reasoning converge at one point: the notion of an absolute wisdom inhering in the Creator as the ‘formal pattern’ of this providential ordering of things and in the creature as the ‘logos’ of its natural self-development. The coincidence of these two notions of wisdom is a metaphysical postulate without which reason can neither unravel the riddles of nature nor rise to the contemplation of its Author from the signs of visible things, because it would find

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itself revolving in the orbit of a chaotic universe wherein no secure footpath can be found.<sup>32</sup>

### II

#### JUSTIFICATION OF THE CAUSAL PRINCIPLE AND THE CRITIQUE OF CONTINGENCY

The affirmation of a necessary quantitative and qualitative determinism in the cosmic order here advocated would seem to run counter to the phenomena of becoming and change in the universe and involve us in the Eleatic dilemma. Yet the Eleatic dilemma rests upon an elaborate metaphysics of being which contradicts the testimony of sense-experience and is, at any rate, incapable of giving a satisfactory account of the glaring reality of becoming in the universe. But the claims of Eleatic ontology can be entertained only once it has succeeded in explaining becoming away, and this would call for an elaborate metaphysic of becoming, a metaphysic, that is, which ought at least to reckon with becoming as a fact, and not merely as the fleeting panorama of appearance.

Viewed in its metaphysical perspective, the problem of activity is only one instance of the problem of becoming. A distinction, however, is here imperative, the distinction, namely, between the two modes of voluntary and involuntary activity referred to above. In the latter case the becoming involved in natural activity is intrinsic and immanent; that is, is posited through an immanent necessity inhering in the essence of the agent and the laws of its becoming. In the former case, this becoming is extrinsic, that is, is posited through an extraneous free determinant, whose action emanates from his spontaneous will. But in both species of activity there is a transition from one phase of being to another, a movement towards the perfection of being-in-act and this is the definition of becoming. In this movement or transition whatever plays the role of 'energizing principle,' either in a free or

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a compulsory manner, is cause in the strict sense. Thus the notion of activity is seen, upon analysis, to be no more and no less than the notion of this development from potency to Act;<sup>33</sup> from relative imperfection to relative perfection.

In their quest for knowledge about things, Averroës explains, the Philosophers<sup>34</sup> observed that perceptible things, whether animate or inanimate, were composed of Matter and Form; the latter being ‘the principle (*ma'nā*) whereby an object comes to be after it was not,’ the former being ‘that out of which’ the object comes to be. They observed, likewise, that an object comes to be *through* something (‘an shay’) which they called the ‘efficient cause’ and ‘for the sake of something’ which they called the ‘final cause.’<sup>35</sup> With this distinction in composite beings between Matter and Form securely established, they proceeded to show that the Form constitutes the principle of Being as well as the principle of Activity in these composite things. For in the first place, it is to the Form that the name and definition of a thing point, and through it that it comes to be.<sup>36</sup> In the second place, inasmuch as such a composite object becomes what it is through the perfection (*kamāl*) which is imparted to Matter by Form, Form is avowedly the ‘energizing principle,’ the ground of actualization in this process of becoming. This can further be demonstrated from the metaphysical axiom that a being ‘acts inasmuch as it is in Being,’<sup>37</sup> since whatever is in potency can be actualized only through the agency of that which is in act.

The anthropomorphic view of activity and causality, which al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arites cherish, ought therefore to yield to this metaphysical interpretation of the matter, if we are to be rid of the errors which anthropomorphism involves. The anthropomorphic conception of activity is, in fact, a naïve and primitive conception which cannot even serve the purpose for which it was contrived; namely, the specification of the mode of divine activity, because it reduces divine activity to the status of human activity with all the passivity and imperfection such a reduction underlies. No wonder the Ash'arites were incapable of arriving at an adequate conception of the Deity and His relation-

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ship to the universe in a manner which did not impair His transcendence. Al-Ghazālī typifies their misconception of the nature of this relationship in his attack on the Peripatetic notion of God as Pure Act, of Thought thinking itself. Here he accuses the Philosophers of despoiling God of His attributes and reducing Him to an inert and lifeless being whose consciousness does not extend beyond the limits of consciousness of self.<sup>38</sup> But it is precisely with a view to avoiding the anthropomorphic fallacy that the Philosophers postulate God as Pure Act, from which all Being and Activity in the universe emanate. The examination of the order of being and its progression from composite things in the world of generation and corruption, to simple and incomposite beings in the heavenly sphere (*sc.* the Separate Intelligences), led them to posit a 'First Intellect' who is free from all composition and whose knowledge embraces all things and determines the order and disposition of the universe in the most eminent way, and who depends, in turn, on a 'First Separate Principle' who is God.<sup>39</sup> It is thus that God, as First Cause, is said to be conscious of the universe and of the order presiding upon it as the cause and principle thereof, rather than as its effect or consequent.<sup>40</sup>

This metaphysical conception of activity in terms of consciousness restores to divine activity the character of transcendence which Ash'arite theology threatened to abolish. God, as Pure Intelligence, is also seen to be Pure Act,<sup>41</sup> so that in the same inward movement of self-consciousness He generates the same current of Being and Movement through which the Being and order of the universe are constituted. And it is in this way that He is said to preserve the universe in being and order; that is to be its Author and Designer. Ash'arite theology is unable to break through the circle of anthropomorphism in its conception of activity, because it fails to attain to the pure notion of immanent activity, the highest manifestation of which in the universe is that of consciousness, and thus fails to free God from the conditions of movement and passivity. Similarly, it fails to give any intelligible account of becoming and activity in general. In a

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metaphysics of Act-Potency such activity and becoming are found to be rooted in the discrepancy between the plenitude of the Act and the penury of potency; between the perfection of the Form and the imperfection of the Matter. Therefore becoming is conceived as desire and quest and the teleology of its movement as rationality.<sup>42</sup> But inasmuch as such a teleology must have a terminal issue in a principle of absolute fulfilment wherein cosmic movement and desire find their rest, this principle can be said to act only if by act is meant the inward movement of self-consciousness revolving upon itself. And inasmuch as in this movement is grounded the being of everything that is, in so far as it shares in the Act and desires it, becoming, activity and movement are seen to be no more than the expression of the immanent movement of divine self-consciousness.

The aversion of al-Ghazālī to this doctrine of divine life and activity leads him, as we have seen, to found the Godhead of the Divinity in a principle of volition and power, rather than in a principle of consciousness and wisdom. This procedure is found, upon examination, to impair the transcendence of God and the super-eminence of His activity and wisdom. The Peripatetics, whatever the defects of their doctrine of divine consciousness, are endeavouring at least to save the purity of divine consciousness and activity and to free it from the conditions of change and movement. That is why they find the essence of God, as Pure Act, in pure self-consciousness and seek to specify in its terms the mode of divine life as well as the mode of divine activity. For them, in short, God remains the pivot of all cosmic activity and the centre towards which divine consciousness, like all consciousness indeed, gravitates. For al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arites on the other hand, divine wisdom and consciousness, as well as divine volition and activity, have their centre outside the Divinity, that is, in the sphere of cosmic becoming and movement. God manifests His sovereign will and His sovereign wisdom in the purposeless and senseless act of creating and cognizing a transient world of creatures who are shorn of any positive or substantial being.<sup>43</sup> In thus derogating of the divinity of the Almighty,

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al-Ghazālī and the Ash‘arites propose to defend His transcendence against the allegedly blasphemous claims of the Peripatetics.

With this digression on the metaphysical aspect of causality and activity in their bearing on divine activity, we turn to the justification of the causal principle in its naturalistic setting. A law of necessary concomitance of knowledge and causality, it was shown, ought to reign if the danger of universal scepticism and nihilism are to be averted. But this indirect procedure would remain futile unless the validation of the causal principle is achieved in a positive way and the metaphysics of contingency successfully refuted.

With respect to the validation of the causal principle, Averroës argues, at the opening of his refutation of al-Ghazālī’s thesis, that the reality of causal operations is attested by sense-experience. One can only contest this reality on the ground that visible agents are not sufficient for the production of their effects, and consequently cannot be said legitimately to be causes in a genuine sense. Yet the question of the sufficiency of visible or secondary causes for the production of their effects is irrelevant to the question of the validity of the causal principle in general. The Peripatetics themselves admit the existence of a Transcendent Agent (*Fā'il min Khārij*) who is the condition of the being as well as of the operation of existing things.<sup>44</sup> But this admission, according to them, does not warrant the contention that all activity is ascribable to this Transcendent Agent; since it is indisputable that accidents, at least, are generated by natural causes.<sup>45</sup> The error of theistic occasionalism, as propounded by al-Ghazālī and the Ash‘arites, consists precisely in their contention that God, as the Primary Agent, is the sole agent in all the operations of nature *because* He is Agent *par excellence*. In these operations, they argue, it is either the Creator or the creature who acts; there is no middle term to the process of activity. But it is in this false disjunction that the root of the difficulty lies. Al-Ghazālī argues that God must be a voluntary agent, since it is impossible that He should be a natural agent; that is, an agent who acts through a mode of absolute necessity. On this account,

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he charges the Peripatetics with despoiling God of the attribute of voluntary activity. But here too his argument is vitiated by the incomplete disjunction upon which it rests. We ought, therefore, to examine the exact manner in which activity is predicable of the Creator and the creature, of the Primary and Secondary agents, in the hope that the determination of the exact mode of activity in the two instances might solve the dilemma in which the Ash'arites seek to involve the Peripatetics.

In the Act-Potency metaphysics which we have outlined above, activity is interpreted as the supervention upon a substratum in potency of a specific 'Form,' which brings it forth from the state of potentiality to the state of actuality. An agent, therefore, is said to act inasmuch as it effects this transition from potency to act in a given substratum.<sup>46</sup> And this applies to all agents finite and infinite, primary and secondary. Whenever there is activity, there is transition from potency to act. Yet the mode of activity is not the same in the case of the primary and the secondary agents. The fact of activity is identical in both cases; otherwise its predication of the universal and particular agents would not be warranted, as the Ash'arites rightly contend. The *mode* of this activity is different in the two instances. The manner in which a particular agent acts consists in bringing a substratum from a state of potency to a state of act in a determinate way, by imparting to it a particular 'Form.' Once this has been achieved, the process comes to rest and the agent and patient drift apart, to stand each on its own.<sup>47</sup> But in the case of the Universal Agent the dependence does not terminate with the production of the effect, since the effect depends upon the First Cause for its subsistence, no less than for its genesis. That is why it can legitimately be said that the Primary Agent is the Author and the Preserver of the Universe, through the providence of order whereby He governs all things.<sup>48</sup>

This delineation of the respective spheres of activity of the Primary and secondary agents in natural operations affords us with the clue to the false dilemma which al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arites propose. Inasmuch as a distinct province is assigned

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to each of these agents, no conflict or encroachment can come about, so that the elimination of the secondary agent by the Primary agent would amount to a genuine act of aggression, so to speak.

The appeal to sense-experience, it might be conceded, is of no avail, since the opponent might always urge, in the manner of al-Ghazālī, that sense-experience attests merely that the effect occurs with (*ma'ahu*) the cause rather than through it (*bihi*);<sup>49</sup> and this would leave undetermined the question of the internal relationship between the cause and the effect, for sense-experience cannot avowedly go beyond asserting an external relationship of contiguity or succession. Such a relationship, however, is purely temporal, so that an ontological relationship between cause and effect, in terms of being, would have to be demonstrated. Otherwise, the occasionalist thesis of al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arites would be irrefutable.

In order to demonstrate the validity of causality, as a first principle of ontology, causality ought to be logically deducible from the concept of Being. The most elemental principle of Being is the law of its identity with itself. Any assertion which violates this principle can be ruled out as irrational and absurd. But the negation of the causal principle violates this very law of identity inasmuch as it runs counter to the law of necessary concomitance between the knowledge of Being and its causal operations. . . . Being, as we have seen,<sup>50</sup> utters itself in causality, otherwise its nature would remain hidden; that is, it would remain utterly unknowable and impervious to human consciousness. The positive reality of knowledge is not here in question, since scepticism cannot escape this reality without loading itself with the 'burden of the proof' and thus surrendering its attitude of arm-chair nihilism. Nor can scepticism fly in the face of the fact that things are known in their identity with themselves and their distinction from other things, no matter what metaphysical account is given of this knowledge, its conditions or its limits. Now the law of identity states that things are what they are by reason of the specific quiddities or definitions proper to them.

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These quiddities or definitions cannot be deduced *a priori* from the abstract concept of the thing-in-itself, as Platonic idealism teaches. The differentiae, without which such definitions would be impossible, cannot be determined *a priori* either. Instead they are determined through a process of empirical induction. And although the differentiae themselves are evidently not data of sense-experience, their determination is possible only through inference from the empirical effects which are the outward signs of these differentias, as it were. The negation of the causal correlation between an entity and the effects emanating from it would, therefore, militate against the possibility of knowledge itself. It is here manifest how the abolition of knowledge amounts to the negation of the identity, as well as the very possibility of a definition of being.<sup>51</sup>

At this point we can turn to the question of the necessity of the causal nexus. But an important remark ought to be made at the outset. The validity of the causal principle is independent of its necessity. That is, the validity of the causal principle might be retained even if the necessity of the causal nexus were exposed to doubt. We have already examined the manner in which the sufficiency of the secondary, natural cause is conditional upon the co-operation of the Primary Cause, which represents the condition of its being as well as its operation in the natural sphere. This Primary Cause, believes Averroës, is avowedly a condition in the necessary operation of natural causes, so that if it were to be supposed *ad absurdum* to withhold its co-operation, the necessary operation of the secondary cause would be impeded. But in addition to this 'transcendent condition' there exists a whole series of conditions which are indispensable for the necessary operation of the secondary cause in question. Production has regard to two terms: passivity and activity (*fi'l wa'n fi'āl*). When the agent impinges upon the patient the effect of the Form does not necessarily follow upon it unless the series of conditions requisite for the emergence of that effect is wholly posited. Inasmuch, however, as the series of conditions (*idhafāt*) is infinite, the possibility of the supervention of an impeding

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condition cannot be discounted *a priori*. A body, for instance, might be endowed with a property whereby it can withstand the active operation of an agent (e.g. fire), but this would not justify the contention that the agent is shorn of the active property peculiar to it (*sc.* combustion).

The demonstration of the validity and necessity of the causal principle, which we have been attempting, cannot go beyond the explicitation of its contents and the determination of its metaphysical grounds. But once this has been achieved, the critic would have frankly to admit that positive deductions can do nothing to convert the sceptic. The negative procedure, however, might prove of some help here. Like all elemental, indemonstrable principles, the causal principle can be defended against the attacks of scepticism. Once these attacks have been repulsed the integrity of the principle in question would emerge intact and its validity, if not conclusively demonstrated, would at any rate have been strengthened. With this in mind we can now turn to the second stage of the Averroist argument; namely, the critique of the contingent metaphysic of occasionalism.

In repudiating the necessity of the causal principle, al-Ghazālī, following the Ash'arite doctors, declares that the correlation between causes and effects, far from being necessary, is rather a contingent sequence following the 'direction of habit.' But this notion of 'habit,' Averroës argues, is found upon examination to be a meaningless notion. Al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arites might mean by this 'habit' one of three things: the habit of God in determining the normal course of things; the habit of things themselves in following this normal course; or our own habit in passing judgments upon things. Now it is impossible that this habit should be God's, since habit is defined as a 'trait (malakah) acquired by the agent and necessitating the recurrence of his activity in the generality of cases';<sup>53</sup> and this runs counter to the doctrine of the immutable ways of God as set forth in the Koran itself where it is written: 'Thou shalt never find an alteration of the ways of God.'<sup>54</sup> Nor can it be the habit of things, whereby

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they normally act in a uniform way; since a habit thus implanted in things is more appropriately called ‘nature.’ And the notion of a nature which is necessary at one time and contingent at another is absurd. There remains the third and final alternative; namely, the habit in question refers to our own mode of passing judgments upon things. This is admissible, if by this habit is meant the mode of the intellect’s procedure in passing judgments upon things, as necessitated by its own nature. But inasmuch as the notion of habit is contingent and conventional (*waḍ’i*), to speak of the ‘habit’ of the intellect would be incompatible with the notion of the necessity of the intellect’s procedure in accordance with the necessary laws of logic, unless we hold with some of the Mutakallims that the nature of the intellect is itself contingent.<sup>55</sup> If the nature of the intellect, like the nature of everything else, is alleged to be contingent and inconstant, then no wisdom can be attributed to the Creator in the production of created things;<sup>56</sup> and this is clearly contrary to the theological presuppositions of the Ash’arites themselves.

The most decisive argument which al-Ghazālī adduces in his demonstration of the rational possibility of miracle is the argument from God’s infinite power and resourcefulness. Even if the specific determinations of things are conceded, al-Ghazālī argues as we have seen, and even if the fixity of the cosmic order is conceded too, it can still be urged that God can cause a body to withstand the effect of combustion, for example, upon contact with fire, by transmuting the nature of fire or the nature of that body and thus withholding from fire its specific effect which is combustion.<sup>57</sup> Similarly God can relax the causal series or abolish it altogether, without violence to the rationality of the causal process, and thus bring about a miraculous deed capable of insertion into the natural order. Thus the resuscitation of the dead can be explained in the following manner. It is admitted by the Peripatetics themselves that matter is susceptible of every determination: earth and the other elements become vegetation; vegetation is consumed by the animal and thus it is transmuted into blood; blood in turn becomes semen, and semen generates

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the embryo. This process is normally wrought throughout a determinate lapse of time; yet there is nothing rationally repugnant in the assumption that the Almighty can bring about the generation of the animal from earth in a very brief lapse of time, by relaxing the time-process through which the successive phases of generation described above normally ensue one upon the other.<sup>58</sup> Thus the integrity of the causal principle would be safeguarded at least ideally, and the rationality of miracle vindicated in stringent, philosophic terms.

But such a contention, retorts Averroës, is philosophically indefensible, however much it might commend itself to the advocates of theistic occasionalism. The Peripatetics would go the length of admitting the possibility of an agent impinging upon a patient without effecting any change in it, owing to the intervention of an extraneous condition which impedes the efficacy of the agent in question.<sup>59</sup> They would also go the length of admitting that bodies which have a 'Common Matter' are reciprocally convertible into one another; as is the case with the four simple elements: air, water, earth and fire. But it is with respect to bodies which have no 'Common Matter,'<sup>60</sup> or whose 'material substrata' are diverse that the difficulty arises. Can it be said that such bodies are susceptible of receiving identical Forms or are convertible one into the other? If, for instance, a body is not susceptible of a specific Form without passing through a series of intermediate phases, is it possible for it to receive the Form in question directly, as al-Ghazālī alleges in the case of the generation of the animal out of earth? But if this were possible, as the Mutakallims and al-Ghazālī hold, and if the form-man could supervene upon 'earth' without the intermediate states or dispositions, then wisdom would have enjoined that man should have been created without the round-about process which the generation of man normally follows, unless God's wisdom were incomplete and His power ineffective.<sup>61</sup>

From this it appears wherein, according to Averroës, the validity of the causal nexus, as a principle of ontology, lies. The contingent, occasionalist metaphysics of the Ash'arites is rejected

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in favour of a partial determinism grounded in divine wisdom, the identity of substances, and the necessary concomitance of knowledge and being.

### III

#### LIMITATIONS OF THE AVEROIST CRITIQUE OF OCCASIONALISM

The Averroist rehabilitation of causality, in the name of Aristotelianism, deals a decisive blow to occasionalism. Yet despite its acuteness, the Averroist critique of Ash'arism is not altogether unassailable. In his attack on al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arites, Averroës fails to do sufficient justice to the crucial problem out of which occasionalism grew. The motive of al-Ghazālī in repudiating causality was the desire to give a rational account of miracle as a phenomenon capable of insertion into the natural order, without violence to its rational integrity. That is why he ended by reducing this natural order into a contingent order whose being and whose subsistence depended, at every instant of its life, upon the direct intervention of the Deity. This metaphysics of contingency, Averroës maintains in refuting the Ghazalian thesis, is not only absurd and indefensible; what is more, it is inimical to the very thesis it is designed to vindicate: namely, the sovereignty and the omnipotence of God—because it reduces God into a capricious and senseless Despot, whose creative designs are shorn of all rationality and the counsel of whose providence is a counsel of folly.

Now if the metaphysical drapery of theistic occasionalism is allowed to drop, on account of its naïveness and its inner inconsistency, what would be the fate of the miraculous and the extraordinary in the cosmic order? What rational account can be proffered, that is to say, in the justification of God's heterogeneous incursion into the domain of the real? The legitimacy of the problem, as we have hinted previously, is not here in question;

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since, in any case, such legitimacy can be affirmed or denied only once the case for miracle has been fully investigated. If so, then what can philosophy say about miracle and the rationality of its extraordinary emergence in nature?

It is Averroës' answer to this question which marks his failure to fathom the problem of miracle to its depths. Philosophy, he maintains, has nothing at all to say about this problem, because it is a problem which falls wholly outside the pale of philosophic speculation. We shall see shortly that this answer is not incongruous with the intellectualistic and deterministic presuppositions of Averroës' metaphysics. But before examining these presuppositions might it not be said, at the outset, in the defence of Averroës, that his thesis is not altogether unjustifiable, at least in principle? For the credulous as well as for the sceptic, miracle is without philosophic relevance. Whether miracle is believed or disbelieved, the consequence is the same: miracle is not a problem at all; in the former case, because it is accepted without question; in the latter case, because there is no question of accepting it. And Averroës, in his procedure in dismissing miracle as irrelevant to philosophic speculation, is endeavouring to do justice to the faith of the credulous as well as to the unfaith of the sceptic.

On the surface of it such a position might appear innocuous; but this is an illusion. Miracle might be accepted by the credulous unquestioningly or rejected by the sceptic uncompromisingly. But if the credulous has the right to be enlightened, the sceptic has the right to be converted. The enlightenment of the credulous might not be as urgent a matter as the conversion of the sceptic. But what of the sceptic who slumbers in every one of us? The questionings of this sceptic must be met, and the sceptic himself converted, through the only effective weapon; that of rational argument.

It might be suspected here that this emphatic insistence on the efficacy of reason in the conversion of the unbeliever would lead imperceptibly to a position of absolute intellectualism, not unlike that of Averroës. This, however, is not the case; for what we are endeavouring to do here is neither to abolish the sphere of

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belief nor to confuse it with that of reason; we are advocating, that is to say, neither absolute intellectualism nor absolute fideism. Much less are we endeavouring to plant the standard of reason in the territory of faith, through a process of metaphysical violence. We are here concerned with the problem of ‘initial belief’— at that point where a ‘critical rationalism’ can do a great deal to convert the sceptic and enlighten the credulous. And it is our contention that philosophy has something to say about such problems, not with respect to the affirmation or the denial of the evidence upon which their authenticity rests, however, but rather with respect to their critical rationalization and their incorporation into the body of doctrine rationally valid, once their credentials have been examined and the seal of genuineness affixed to them.

After reproducing al-Ghazālī’s account of the Peripatetic naturalistic interpretation of miracle,<sup>62</sup> Averroës writes: ‘As regards miracles, the ancient philosophers had nothing to say about them, because these things according to them are to be reckoned among matters which should not be critically investigated, or scrutinized, because they pertain to the first principles of religion (*shar'*). Whoever questions or criticizes them deserves punishment according to them; as, indeed, whoever enquires into the other fundamentals of religion, such as the question: whether God exists; since the existence (of these things) is not doubtful, although the mode of their existence is a “divine thing” transcending the powers of human reason.’<sup>63</sup> The justification of this acquiescence is that virtue is grounded in these fundamentals of religion. But speculative knowledge itself depends upon the acquisition of virtue, so that knowledge would be impossible unless virtue is presupposed as its condition. Now if it is indisputable that speculative disciplines rest upon certain precepts (*awqā'*) which are transmitted to a teacher, much more ought practical disciplines to be referable to the authority of a teacher.<sup>64</sup> It is the duty of whoever delves into these disciplines, therefore, to accept the first principles pertaining to them without question; because this acceptance is indispensable for religious virtue which

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in turn is indispensable for the existence of man as man. The repudiation of the first principles of religion is therefore inimical to the very existence of man as a social animal. All that can be positively asserted with respect to these principles is that they pertain to a domain which transcends human reason; so that their admission is incumbent on the philosopher, despite his ignorance of the grounds of their validity or their inner reasons (*asbāb*). That is why we find the ancients silent on the question of miracle which is the ground of the validity of religion and the ultimate guarantee of virtue, according to them.<sup>65</sup>

Avicenna's naturalistic interpretation of miracle—Averroës pursues the argument—can be admitted if the facts actually warrant it (*idhā ṣahḥal'wujūd*); that is, if a body is actually seen to change through the agency of a non-corporeal power or entity. This admission, however, does not go beyond the admission of the possibility of such phenomena *simpliciter*. It does not warrant the contention that these phenomena are possible for man. For a multitude of things which are possible-in-themselves are, nevertheless, impossible for man. And miracle ought to be reckoned among such phenomena. The only limitation on this maxim is that things impossible-in-reason are not possible at all, not even for the prophet who is avowedly capable of performing deeds not possible for the generality of men.<sup>66</sup> The most outstanding instance of such miraculous deeds is the Koran whose miraculousness does not rest merely upon authority (*al-sam'*) as in the case of converting the stick into a snake, but rather on the evidence of direct perception and reflection alike. Its unique miraculousness is, therefore, so glaringly perceptible that it can be verified by all men at all times.<sup>67</sup>

The special predilection of Muslim theologians for the status of the Koran as miracle, in an absolute sense, is too well known to need repetition here. Throughout the centuries, these theologians, in their apologetic controversies, have always fallen back on this 'greatest of miracles' as the ultimate ground of their belief in the genuineness of its supernatural origin and the authenticity of Prophet Muhammad's claims to be the vehicle

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through which, as the Word of God, it was revealed to men.<sup>68</sup> This is what is called 'I'jāz al-Qur'ān,' the miraculousness of the Koran. We cannot, of course, undertake to examine this thesis of 'I'jāz' here, or the validity of the claims embodied in this thesis. It is, in fact, a problem which cannot be settled here whether any miracle can authenticate itself in isolation from its historical context or from the inevitable reference it must have to the supernatural. It is doubtful whether any miracle has probative force *in se*; so as to be the absolute guarantee of the authenticity of the supernatural claims with which it is loaded. And although miracle must play a prominent role in the process of authenticating these claims, its probative force is not absolute because it is not the sole authenticating evidence of these claims. For if excessive emphasis on this role is placed, the sceptic might always raise the initial problem: What indeed is the ground of the necessary correlation between miracle and the claims with which it is loaded, as authenticating evidence? A miracle is alleged to prove the genuineness of a prophet's supernatural claims; but this is true only on the assumption that miracle does prove this genuineness. A miracle is alleged to prove that a prophet is a prophet, that is, because he can perform miracles; that he can perform miracles on the other hand, because he is a prophet. Thus we have not escaped in this argument the predicament of circular reasoning.<sup>69</sup>

That a miracle cannot authenticate itself in isolation from the complex of conditions into which it is woven flows from a further circumstance: the circumstance, namely, that a miracle once it is historically authenticated must answer, when considered in itself, to a series of conditions without which no possibility of distinction between the magical, the fraudulent and the miraculous would remain. This would naturally raise the fundamental question as to what it is which constitutes miracle in the genuine sense; and whatever our answer to this question, the argument from 'stylistic perfection'<sup>70</sup> is too naïve to be seriously entertained as a philosophic solution of the problem of miracle, in its bearing on the alleged supernatural origin of divinely revealed scripture.

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Yet the grounds of the Averroist special concession in favour of the miraculousness of the Koran are not to be sought in the special validity of its claims to be miracle in an absolute sense. Rather must they be sought in the Averroist desire to give a plausible naturalistic justification of the validity of miracle. His distinction between phenomena possible-in-themselves, although not possible for the generality of men, and phenomena impossible absolutely, as well as the special and unique instance of the Koran in its profession to be genuine miracle, led a striking verisimilitude to his position. We are, of course, far from holding with the extreme advocates of divine omnipotence that the Almighty can effect His miraculous designs in defiance of the very laws of reason. Because, as al-Ghazālī, Averroës and Aquinas all teach, the irrational is simply impossible, even for the Almighty Himself.<sup>71</sup> Yet it is a grave illusion to confuse the supernatural with the irrational or the self-contradictory; that is, with that which is impossible-in-itself because impossible-in-reason. And miracle ought to have a supernatural content to justify the special role it plays in the complex of revelation. If we empty miracle of this supernatural content with which it is normally loaded, we are left with nothing but an extraordinary phenomenon which is incapable of insertion into the natural process and, at the same time, is without special theological relevance. But this is the very definition of magic and sorcery, if such can be historically shown to exist. And although the evidence for such existence is not wanting, historically authenticated miracles would have no other status than that of magic or sorcery.

The problem of miracle in its relation to the supernatural is only one instance of the wider problem of religion in its relation to the supernatural as its ultimate ground and justification. What has been said about emptying miracle of its supernatural content can now be said, in broader terms, about religion in general. A religion which is divested of special reference to the supernatural can have either of two characters: it would be either an ethics or a metaphysics, depending on the emphasis it lays on the speculative or practical interests of man. Such, for instance, is

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the nature of Confucianism and Stoicism, on the one hand, and of Hinduism and neo-Platonism, on the other. But it is only through phenomenal confusion that certain thinkers identify the religious with the ethical or the metaphysical. The ultimate ground of this identification is the failure to perceive the distinctively religious in religion. A religion which can lay a genuine claim to being a religion, must no doubt take account of man's life in its various aspects: ethical, speculative, etc. In the ethical realm, religion plays the role of a vitalizing or sanctifying agency, through which the life of virtue receives its flowering in a life of holiness which transcends the plane of natural virtue and sanctifies it from within. The spirit plays in this process of ethical transcendence, the role of energizing principle, one might even say, the role of ethical creation and fashioning. Nor can genuine religion be without metaphysical significance, because it cannot dissociate itself from the structure of reality and of man's perception of this structure. But in neither case are we dealing with the distinctively religious in religion, otherwise, religion would be altogether superfluous. The ethical and the metaphysical are integrated into the religious as the underlying substructure; or as the 'organic framework' of which the religious is the inner principle. Thus is revealed the distinctively religious in religion as that which emanates from a supernatural source, illuminates the natural from within, and establishes in the soul of man a dynamic, whose source and direction are beyond man. In other words, as that which is the free outpouring into the soul of man of the spiritual energy of grace. In the external drama of history, this dynamic takes the form of a supernatural providence. Now in both cases, in that of grace and that of providence, in the external and the internal working of the spirit, God is the sovereign source and sustainer.

For Averroës, however, the prospect of such incursion of the supernatural into the natural order is unthinkable. The two poles within which his thought revolves are Aristotelian determinism and Ash'arite occasionalism. The Ash'arite metaphysics, however, is so repugnant to him that he refuses to entertain either its contents or the motives underlying its formulation. In their

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desire to rationalize miracle the Ash'arites were led to formulate a metaphysics according to which God intervenes in the cosmic order, at every instant of its life. Miracle is rationally possible, according to this metaphysics, because God intervenes directly in every natural operation and in every natural phenomenon. This, in the last analysis, is al-Ghazālī's justification of miracle in rational terms. But witness here the paradox of al-Ghazālī's solution of the problem of miracle. If miracle is described as an extraordinary event resulting from the direct impingement of the supernatural on the natural realm; that is, of God's immediate intervention in an historical situation here and now, then the manner in which every natural event, on the assumptions of al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arites, comes about is miraculous in this exact sense. Yet the significance of miracle in its character as probative evidence consists precisely in this: that miracle is a unique event in the series of cosmic events, a positive departure from the normal course of things. In this uniqueness is grounded its efficacy as proving evidence—not indeed that the unique is always miraculous, but rather on account of its emergence in a manner and at a time when this emergence is least expected, through the spontaneous decree of God's sovereign will. And this spontaneous determination has efficacy because of its avowed reference to the supernatural designs of God and His absolute power. Theistic occasionalism has not succeeded, therefore, in giving a rational account of miracle liable to safeguard the unity of the natural process. Instead, it has dissolved the very meaning of the miraculous and the extraordinary by reducing it to the status of the natural and the ordinary; or what amounts to the same thing, by reducing the natural and the ordinary to the status of the miraculous. This is the wages of false dialectic: the dialectic which proves too little in proving too much.

Yet the motives of the Ash'arite doctors in formulating this metaphysic are certainly genuine. God can intervene directly in the cosmic process whenever His love or His wisdom so enjoin. Philosophy must accept the fact of this intervention, once it is historically authenticated, as part of the data out of which its

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picture of the universe is painted. We have already hinted that philosophy cannot undertake legitimately to call into account the fact of miracle, with a view to affirming or denying it. Nor can it disallow the possibility of miracle on *a priori* grounds, because it cannot be fitted into a metaphysical pattern contrived *a priori*. The fact of miracle falls outside the pale of metaphysical speculation: it is a problem for the historian, not the metaphysician, to settle. The task of the metaphysician, once the fact of miracle has been historically ascertained, is to contrive a metaphysical pattern into which the heterogeneous and the extraordinary can be inserted without violence to the integrity of this pattern; since the heterogeneous and the extraordinary could be as genuine constituents of the real as the homogeneous and the ordinary. It is true an occasionalist account of miracle threatens to defeat its own ends and is, in any case, rationally indefensible. But whatever account we opt for, once occasionalism is dismissed as untenable, must meet the requirements inherent in the problem of miracle and of God's extraordinary intervention in history. And this is precisely where the Averroist critique of Ash'arite occasionalism proves to be radically deficient.

The root of this deficiency of the Averroist solution of the problem lies in the intellectualism and determinism which permeate Averroës' philosophic writings. We will examine this intellectualism first, as set forth in the tract *On the Agreement between Philosophy and Theology* and the *Tahāfut*.<sup>72</sup> Here we find the substance of what went into Medieval thought as the Averroist theory of the Two-Truths, which played such a notorious role in the theological and philosophic controversies of the later half of the thirteenth century and which led finally to the condemnation of Averroism in 1277 by the ecclesiastical authorities.<sup>73</sup> In his tract *On the Agreement between Philosophy and Theology* (*Faṣl al-Maqāl*), Averroës distinguishes three species of knowledge: demonstrative (*burhānī*), dialectical (*jadalī*) and rhetorical (*khitābī*).<sup>74</sup> To the first species belong forms of reasoning which rest upon indubitable premisses which can be arrived at only after painstaking study and training in the speculative disciplines. To

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the second belong forms of reasoning which rest on premisses which are commonly known or believed (*mashhūrah* or *maznūnah*), but are not necessarily self-evident or apodeictic.<sup>75</sup>

This distinction between these three forms of reasoning tallies perfectly with Aristotle's own account of the matter.<sup>76</sup> With Aristotle, however, the distinction is of a purely logical character; that is, is a distinction which concerns the stringency of propositions and syllogisms considered in themselves. Averroës exploits this distinction, instead, for theological purposes; and herein consists the originality of his treatment of the subject. To this threefold division of 'modes of reasoning,' argues Averroës, there corresponds a threefold distinction between the common run of men (*al-jumhūr al-ghālib*), the theologians and the philosophers, and in turn the distinction between the three disciplines: philosophy, scholastic theology and rhetoric.<sup>77</sup> This classification can ultimately be reduced to a two-fold classification: the people of demonstration (*Ahl al-burhān*) on the one hand, and the generality of men on the other. We have here the famous classification, set forth by Ibn-Tufail, d. 1185 (Abubacer), in *Hayy ibn Yaqzān*, of men into the 'specially gifted' (*ahāl al-fitār al-fā'iqaḥ*) and the generality of men (*al-jumhūr al-ghālib*). This classification became conclusively enshrined in Spanish-Arabian philosophy before Averroës' time and it is in it that the origin of the theory of the two-truths ought to be sought. It appears in Ibn-Bādjah (Avempace, d. 1138), and in Spanish philosophy generally, and is accepted by philosophic opinion as an indubitable postulate.

Now, on the surface of it, this theory seems quite innocuous; men are divided, in point of fact, into the specially gifted and the common generality of men; but it is the corollaries of this theory which are philosophically and morally objectionable. From the moral standpoint, this theory amounts to the establishment of a closed caste-system; since it leaves no possibility of transition from one category into the other, and this reduces the qualitative distinction between men into a quasi-natural or quasi-biological distinction, as in the case of the threefold classification of society

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in Plato's Republic. From the philosophic standpoint it amounts to the relegation of theology to a subordinate position and the instatement of reason as the ultimate tribunal in conflicts where faith is involved, as will become clear in the sequel.

Throughout the whole tract on the *Agreement between Philosophy and Theology*, Averroës insists that philosophy is the foster-sister of theology;<sup>78</sup> that the truth can never contradict the truth, and therefore no conflict can arise between philosophy and theology. But when Averroës proceeds to develop this thesis and to specify the relationship 'of right' which ought to exist between theology and philosophy, his sympathies are displayed in a naked way. No sooner has he stated as an *a priori dictum* that the truth can never contradict the truth than he finds himself face to face with the actual reality of this conflict which is too glaring to be slurred over with such dispatch. In perfect consistency with himself, he resorts to the time-hallowed expedient of explaining such a conflict away by pronouncing it a purely apparent conflict, not a genuine one. But without disputing his honesty in making this assertion, the critic cannot fail to observe, upon closer scrutiny, that this expedient is a sheer gesture of good faith which carries with it no philosophic weight. It is an *a priori* presumption which cannot be validated from the standpoint of the Averroist system itself. The impossibility of this validation is rooted in the failure of Averroës to achieve a genuine delineation of the respective, autonomous spheres of theology and philosophy (that is, between faith and reason) or to specify the exact manner in which they are mutually related. And this is the inevitable burden of Averroës' absolute intellectualism. Instead of a distinction between the domains of reason and faith, Averroës establishes a subordination, in which the integrity of faith is sacrificed and the claims of theology allowed to be usurped by reason. Thus theology and philosophy, the domains of faith and reason, instead of being generically distinguished, at least with regard to the grounds of their validity if not with respect to their positive contents, are pronounced homogeneous in scope and in metaphysical grounding. Here the aforementioned distinction

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between the three species of reasoning re-emerges to lend support to reason in its claims to usurping the rights of faith. For this distinction, as we have seen, is not vertical but rather horizontal. Demonstrative knowledge is superior in character to the dialectical knowledge of scholastical theology, because more certain. Now apart from the detraction from the certainty of revealed theology which this thesis implies, it is clear how in any conflict between philosophy and theology, between reason and faith, reason is inevitably bound to carry it over faith. In this manner, the fate of faith is sealed beyond redemption, and the authority of revelation reduced to the plane of dialectical-sophistical reasoning. This is how Averroës urges that in the event of conflict between theology and philosophy, recourse must be had to rational interpretation (*ta'wil*).<sup>79</sup> But inasmuch as this interpretation is not confined to the pure explication of the contents of revealed truth, reason becomes the ultimate tribunal in its conflicts with faith. The unqualified hegemony of reason thus vindicated leaves no scope for the independent validity of revelation, as a mode of knowledge authenticating itself in a manner generically distinct from demonstrative or dialectical knowledge, by virtue of its reference to the supernatural. Theology in this way becomes an inferior species of speculative knowledge, whose tenets can be entertained as relatively valid, on account of the pragmatic utility that accrues to professing them by the unreasoning masses; rather than on any intrinsic grounds of genuine validity.<sup>80</sup>

It is here evident how imperative is the exact demarcation of the boundaries of the contiguous territories of reason and faith, if the integrity of revealed theology is to be safeguarded. Indeed, no one who believes in the genuineness of revealed truth can fail to acknowledge its claims for absolute validity. There can be no question here of a relative or comparative certainty or validity. If revealed truth is genuine truth, then it is at least as certain as rational truth. Critical scepticism might, of course, call into question this genuineness; but once this genuineness is ascertained or conceded, there can be no further question of partial or absolute certainty. For in point of strength there can

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be no difference between truth and truth, once their respective validity is acknowledged.

Thus, we believe, there lurks an insidious presumption in the contention of scepticism, that revealed truth is designed for the salvation of the 'vulgar,' and that the innermost secrets of that truth are reserved only to the 'specially gifted,'<sup>81</sup> because such presumption is inspired by the desire to derogate of the integrity and the absoluteness of revealed truth. At heart, its exponents profess belief in its tenets merely as a subterfuge, or at best, as a prudent counsel of secure credulity in the face of the conflicting claims of rational dialectic. Of course, we are in no position to convict the exponents of this view individually or to expose to doubt their sincerity in adhering to it. For in these matters, judgment rests with God, who alone can read the secrets of the heart. Yet such is the wages of the failure to distinguish between the two separate spheres of theology and philosophy: theology is either pronounced coterminous with philosophy in scope, or its claims are dismissed as groundless. In both cases the validity of its positive claims is impaired and its authority and validity endangered. In the former case, because it is inevitably subordinated to the authority of reason and reduced to sheer rational dialectic; in the latter, because it is thrust out of the domain of the rational altogether.

The solution of the problem, as Thomas Aquinas perceived, consists in the emancipation of revealed theology from the jurisdiction of reason altogether, both with respect to its genesis and the grounds of its validity. Reason can, of course, undertake an explicitation of the contents of revealed theology, prepare the grounds for its acceptance, and rebut any specious arguments adduced in combating it. But beyond this reason cannot go: it cannot determine *a priori* the contents of revelation nor can it load it with a greater measure of certitude. Its contents and its certitude are intrinsic to itself, by reason of its supernatural origin.<sup>82</sup> But this is to say that the tenets of revealed theology transcend reason without violating it; since they flow from a supernatural source, who is the Guarantor of their authenticity,

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no less than the authenticity of rational knowledge itself, in its reference to the absolute truth.<sup>83</sup> In this manner the autonomous spheres of reason and faith are properly distinguished, and their respective rights properly determined. Therefore, neither can arrogate to itself what belongs by right to the other; nor can a conflict, in the strict sense, arise between them inasmuch as the respective spheres of their jurisdiction are distinct from one another. These spheres can interpenetrate in more than one direction, but this interpenetration is not synonymous with encroachment; because it does not entail any violation of the principles of their reciprocal relationship.<sup>84</sup>

In addition to these epistemological considerations, the Averroist dismissal of the problem of miracle from the philosophic realm has a further metaphysical ground which we have referred to as Averroist determinism.

The perusal of the clauses embodied in the condemnation of Latin Averroism in 1277, brings out in vivid relief the two most specious implications of Averroism, as the Christian West saw it. These are the Averroist doctrine of the unity of the intellect and its consequences for personal immortality and personal merit and reward and the metaphysical determinism of Averroism and its bearing on faith in divine providence.<sup>85</sup> The former Averroist thesis represents the original contribution of Averroës to the Aristotelian problem of the active-passive intellect. The pre-Averroist, Arabian Peripatetics had solved the problem in a manner which left scope for belief in separate, personal immortality. The Avicennian psychology, for instance, does not imply a threat, it appears, to the personal immortality of man.<sup>86</sup> Nor does al-Fārābī's interpretation of the Aristotelian notion of the 'Active Intellect' go very far beyond the Master towards ascribing to it, a distinct universal mode of existence.<sup>87</sup> That might be one reason why it does not figure in the Ghazālian polemic against the Peripatetics. But the latter thesis, bound up as it is with the cardinal metaphysical presuppositions of Aristotelianism itself is combated with great vehemence by al-Ghazālī on

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account of its inimical bearing on the notion of divine volitional activity and the possibility of God's occasionalist intervention in the cosmic process.

Yet whatever the exact worth of the Ghazālian critique and whatever the naïveness of his reading of the Peripatetic teaching on the mode of divine activity, his motives in combating the determinism of neo-Platonic emanationism are commendable. Fundamentally, the Ghazālian position is sound, despite some minor defects which it underlies and its close kinship to anthropomorphism. Al-Ghazālī argues that divine activity should be described as voluntary, because there belongs to God a quality of determination regarding opposites, and this is the definition of will. The neo-Platonists misunderstand the nature of this activity, therefore, when they describe it as a mode of necessary procession of creation from the Creator, similar to the procession of the effect from the cause or the light from the sun.<sup>88</sup> Averroës, as we have seen, retorts by pointing out that divine activity can neither be described as voluntary nor as involuntary (or natural); since it is a mode of activity, *sui generis*, whose modality is incomprehensible. Otherwise we are caught up in the predicament of anthropomorphism. Averroës' teaching on this question resembles the teaching of Aquinas.<sup>89</sup> But unlike Aquinas, he nowhere concedes the predication of will to God, not even with the proviso that a transcendent modality must be assigned to such a will. Aquinas encounters no difficulty in predicating 'anthropomorphic' attributes to God; since a transcendent mode of predication is reserved to God in every case, as the proper (or primary) subject of all positive, ontological predicates, Whose title to such predication is prior to the title of the creatures themselves. Will, knowledge, power, etc., are not predicable of God because they are predicable of the creatures. They are rather predicable of the creatures, because, in the first instance, they are predicable of God, in whose perfections the creature participates.<sup>90</sup>

The metaphysical determinism latent in the Averroist system is best illustrated in the Averroist thesis concerning the eternity of the world and of matter, the impossibility of an effective divine

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providence and the tacit endorsement of some aspects of the neo-Platonic world-scheme.<sup>91</sup> We can only touch briefly here on these three grand themes of Averroism, in their bearing on the problem with which we are here concerned. Both from the historical standpoint and from the standpoint of general philosophical and theological speculation, the problem of the eternity of the world represents the dividing-line between creative determinism and creative voluntarism, with which creation *ex nihilo* is generally bound up. The centrality of this problem is, of course, independent of the manner in which a solution is proposed thereto. Whether, that is to say, we maintain with the Ash'arites, al-Ghazālī and Albert the Great that a speculative solution of the problem is possible or deny this possibility with Maimonides and Aquinas, on the ground that such a solution must be sought in the order of faith rather than the order of speculation, is immaterial to the philosophical and theological significance we attach to it. What gives the problem of the eternity of the world its entire acuteness is the circumstance that it introduces a necessary determinism into the initial genesis of the cosmic order, occasioned by its conception of an entity (such as the World, Matter or Movement) co-eternal with God. For in this conception there lurks a positive limitation of God's creative power, in so far as He is not conceived as Agent in an absolute sense; but rather as the Agent of becoming or mutation only, whose activity consists merely in bringing forth into a state of actuality the virtual possibilities latent in Prime Matter, which is alleged to be co-eternal with Him.<sup>92</sup>

This statement of the matter must, perhaps, be qualified slightly. Because it is inaccurate, in one sense, to say that Aristotelian-Averroist, hylomorphic dualism sets a positive limitation on the free operation of the creative might of God, since the Matter, which Aristotle and Averroës set up as a principle co-eternal with God has no determinate being independently from the Pure Form, and is, in any case, shorn of any specific determinations whereby it can withstand the Form-giving impact of the Pure Act. But even then there is implicit in this hylo-

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morphic dualism a positive derogation of the infinity of God's power, in His capacity as the Source of all Being. Matter, evidently, on the assumptions of Aristotle and Averroës, is not nothing, but is endowed with a certain mode of being, however minimal; and this being it does not owe to the source of all Being according to them.

The eternity of the world and of Matter was never defended with such staunch resolution as it was by Averroës; not even by Aristotle himself, who confesses in more than one place in his writings the dialectical difficulties involved in the thesis of an eternal universe.<sup>93</sup> The Averroist reading of the Aristotelian teaching on this question is in continuity with the tradition of Arabian Peripatetism; notably, the Peripatetism of al-Fārābī and Avicenna. It was this faithfulness to the spirit of the 'Master' which exposed the great Peripatetics of the East to the inveterate attacks of Ash'arite theologians. Al-Ghazālī's polemic against this doctrine in the First Disputation of the *Tahāfut* leaves no doubt regarding the grievous perniciousness attached to it, in its bearing on the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. It is true, the Ash'arites and al-Ghazālī, obsessed by the dread of this perniciousness, succumb to the temptation of facile dialectic and set out to demonstrate the beginning of the world in time, as though it was the easiest thing in the world. Their reasoning, as we have seen in Maimonides' critique,<sup>94</sup> does not proceed beyond the dialectic of circularity. If the world is created, (*ḥādīth*) they argued, then it must have a beginning in time (*ḥādīth*): must be created, that is to say. Now the world is created, *ergo*, it is created and consequently has a beginning in time. But this is precisely what the argument is designed to prove in a genuinely stringent manner. And Ash'arite dialectic has not made a single step forward in the direction of such a stringent proof.

In confuting the arguments adduced by al-Ghazālī against the Arabian Peripatetics, Averroës makes certain metaphysical concessions which he considers congruous with the genuine teaching of Aristotle, allowing himself in this way to line up with al-Ghazālī against al-Fārābī and Avicenna. Such, for instance, is the

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concession he makes over the neo-Platonic account of the mode of the emanation of the multiple from the One.<sup>95</sup> His view on the incomprehensible, though transcendent, mode of divine activity represents similarly an advance on Avicenna's in the direction of theistic voluntarism. He likewise censures the Avicennian teaching on the determinism inhering in the activity of the 'Celestial Souls,' etc.<sup>96</sup> But over the question of the eternity of the world, he is absolutely adamant. It is true he nowhere expresses explicit belief in the eternity of the world; it is true also that in the tract on the *Agreement between Philosophy and Theology*, he gives the reader to believe that he adheres to the view that time is co-created with the universe;<sup>97</sup> yet his whole procedure in the *Tahāfut* and elsewhere in exposing the fallacies implicit in al-Ghazālī's argument against the Peripatetics, as well as the enthusiasm he displays in this exposure, leave hardly any doubt as to where his real sympathies lie. The three main points around which the issue centres in the First Disputation of *Tahāfut* is the question of an infinite regress, the eternity of time and of movement, and finally the eternity of the material substratum of the universe.

1. With respect to the impossibility of an infinite regress, which al-Ghazālī adduces in support of the thesis that the world must have a beginning in time, it is to be noted, Averroës remarks, that it is only the *infinite per se* which is impossible. The *infinite per accidens* (*ghair mutanāhin bil'arad*), according to the Peripatetics, he adds, is quite possible, as, for instance, is the case with beings the corruption of which is a condition in the generation of others. It is on this account that the Peripatetics posit alongside the Unmoved Mover, who is eternal and unchanging, a Movable Mover, who is subject to mutation in space, and whose motion is endless. This 'Prime Movable' or First Heaven,<sup>98</sup> is the direct cause of all cosmic movement and becoming.<sup>99</sup> The argument of al-Ghazālī for the beginning of the world in time from the impossibility of an infinite regress rests therefore upon a false conditional premiss.

2. The eternity of the world is bound up with the eternity of

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time and of motion. With respect to the former, it can be urged with perfect consistency that God could have created the universe at a period in time, prior to the period in which it was actually created—as al-Ghazālī himself concedes—that He could have created it at an antecedent time, and so on *ad infinitum*. Now to such assumptions there must correspond a real quantum, as the measure of the pre-figured extension, prior to the creation of the world; and this real quantum is time. Al-Ghazālī, however, after expounding this argument of the Arab Aristotelians, proceeds to refute it through analogy with space. But his procedure, argues Averroës, is illegitimate, because it is impossible to assume a greater or smaller spatial magnitude of the universe than its actual magnitude inasmuch as this would entail the fallacy of an actual infinite magnitude.<sup>101</sup> The arbitrary decree of God to bring the universe into being at the special time He has chosen to do so does not strengthen the case of the Ash'arites and of al-Ghazālī; because this would detract from God's power and resourcefulness. For manifestly, it is more consistent with the notion of God's absolute power and perfection to assume that He is capable of eternal 'creation.' And since His being is not circumscribed by time, His activity which is consequent upon His being, can have no determinate temporal conditions.<sup>102</sup>

With respect to the eternity of motion, the Peripatetics argue, the notion of incipient movement as regards the whole universe is absurd. An incipient existence (*hudūth*) entails clearly an antecedent existent as the subject of the incipient condition of existence. To posit an incipient existent (*ḥādith*), therefore, amounts to positing an existent preceding its own existence, which is absurd. The notion of movement therefore cannot be divorced from the notion of eternity.<sup>103</sup>

3. We can, finally, envisage the eternity of the world from the standpoint of Matter, as the substratum of eternal 'possibility' and of eternal movement. In restating the problem against the attacks of al-Ghazālī, Averroës leaves no doubt regarding his conviction in its certainty. And it is in fact difficult to see how the Aristotelian conception of movement in terms of process from

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Act to Potency, as well as the general, cardinal distinction between these two notions, which represents the foundation-stone of the Aristotelian metaphysics, can abandon the thesis of the eternity of Matter as the subject of eternal movement and possibility. In the first place, movement, as the above argument shows, is inseparable from a substratum of movement, which is eternal in the exact manner movement itself is eternal.<sup>104</sup> The very notion of movement involves its eternity; for motion is a form of change, and change is a process from Potency to Act. In Aristotle's own famous words: 'Motion is the fulfilment of the movable in so far as it is movable';<sup>105</sup> that is 'the fulfilment of what exists potentially, in so far as it exists potentially'.<sup>106</sup> But this presupposes a 'movable' which has always been in motion; for its incipient motion would be inexplicable, unless a 'beginning' of this motion is assumed; and this beginning itself must be the outcome of an antecedent motion. Eternal motion has thus to be presupposed, the moment it is conceded that motion exists. The actualization of the potentiality of the movable, whereby initial motion arises, must be presupposed throughout, even when it is gratuitously assumed that motion has a beginning.<sup>107</sup>

But let us consider now movement from the standpoint of that in which it inheres. It is clear that the world, prior to creation, was always possible (*mumkin*); otherwise it would never have come to be.<sup>108</sup> Now possibility can have regard either to the patient (*qābil*) or to the agent (*fā'il*). Possibility-in-the-patient is a condition for the capacity of the agent; inasmuch as the agent cannot do the impossible. This possibility cannot inhere in no-substratum, nor in the agent, nor in the possibility itself; since the possible is that which is in process of becoming actual. It remains that the subject (*ḥāmil*) of possibility is something which is susceptible of possibility, and this is Matter. But Matter does not come to be in so far as it is Matter; because then we would have to assume a matter of this matter and so on *ad infinitum*. Matter-in-becoming (*māddah mutakawwinah*) is, in fact, the state of the composite while in becoming; since things come to be in so far as they are composed of Matter and Form. If we assume

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that everything comes to be out of something else, then we would have to assume an infinite succession of emergents in an infinite matter; and this is absurd since it amounts to the admission of an actual infinite. Therefore we have to admit that 'Forms' supervene successively upon a substratum, which neither comes to be nor perishes and that this succession is circular and eternal. Consequently it is not Not-Being which is the subject of becoming, but rather something which bears (Hamil) the contrary Forms; and this is Matter.<sup>109</sup>

In rebutting this argument of the Peripatetics, al-Ghazālī urges that possibility, like impossibility, is a purely rational notion to which nothing needs correspond in reality. For avowedly there is nothing to correspond to the impossible (*al-mumtani'*) in concrete reality. But this rebuttal, retorts Averroës, rests on a sheer sophism. All genuine concepts must have something corresponding to them in the sphere of objective reality (*khārij al-nafs*). The impossible, no less than the possible, requires a real entity to which to correspond; because the impossible is the contrary of the possible and contraries must have a 'common substratum.' Now contraries stand to each other in the position of Being to not-Being, inasmuch as the one is the privation of the other. But manifestly, it is not not-Being *per se* (*nafs al-'adam*) which becomes Being; nor Being *per se* which becomes not-Being. Consequently the subject of becoming must be a *tertium quid* of which possibility and generation are predictable, since the latter are impredicable either of not-Being or of actualized Being.<sup>110</sup> This *tertium quid* as the subject of becoming and the alternation of opposites must be in potency for the reception of actual Forms and accidents without itself being actual in any way. Were it an existent in act (*maujūd bi'l-fa'l*) there would be no sense in speaking of the coming-to-be of things; since coming-to-be is a process of transition from not-Being to Being.<sup>111</sup>

Creation in time is therefore wholly irrational. All change is transition from Act to Potency and the coming-to-be of things is no exception. In a famous passage in his Commentary on the 12th Book of the *Metaphysics*,<sup>112</sup> Averroës re-affirms this thesis

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against the Mutakallims' doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, in the name of genuine Aristotelianism. Here as in *Tahāfut*, the role of the First Cause is reduced to the role of the Agent who brings things into Being out of the immanent potentiality of Matter and imprints upon the cosmic order the impress of order and harmony.

It is here evident how Averroës' integral acceptance of the hylomorphic dualism of Aristotle leads him to the endorsement of the allied Aristotelian notion of an eternal Prime Matter, which is the abiding substratum of becoming and change in the universe. Nowhere does he seem to show any signs of wavering over this question. It is true both in *Tahāfut* and in *Faṣl al-Maqāl*, he endeavours to ward off the charge of infidelity (*kufr*) levelled on the exponents of the eternity of the world, either by pointing out the dialectical difficulties involved in its affirmation or negation,<sup>113</sup> or by drawing a subtle distinction between creation as continuous production (*iḥdāth dā'im*) and creation as non-continuous production (*iḥdāth munqati'*). But all this does not seem to affect his conviction in the metaphysical stringency of the doctrine of the eternity of the world. And what is more, he finds nothing obnoxious in its admission to faith in the sovereignty and perfection of God. Rather is the notion of creation in time itself derogatory of this sovereignty and perfection, because it limits God's activity to one mode of creation; that is creation in time,<sup>114</sup> and reduces Him to a state of idle inactivity, throughout the infinite period of time preceding the creation of the universe.<sup>115</sup>

The eternity of the world and of matter, as well as the hylomorphic, metaphysical pattern in which it is cast, thus completes the cycle of Averroës' deterministic view of the universe. At no point in this cycle is the heterogeneous allowed to impinge upon the course of its autonomous movement. The Pure Act is as determined, in its relations of reciprocity to Infinite Potency, as the latter in its desire for the ontological perfection with which the former is charged. Whatever movement is generated in the cosmos is thus seen to be caught between the two poles of a two-fold determination: the energy of the 'Act' and the fertility of Matter, which respond to the call of one another like spouse and

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husband. Without this 'energy' Matter would remain barren and formless; without this 'fertility' Form would remain unfruitful because self-contained. In the domain of concrete existence at least, Form is as dependent on Matter as Matter on Form, without whose conjugal union, so to speak, cosmic generation would be unthinkable.<sup>116</sup>

This determinism, as we have hinted previously, can hardly leave scope for belief in an effective providence of God. Averroës, it is true, concedes that God plays the role of Author and Preserver of the universe;<sup>117</sup> but it is difficult to see how this role can be interpreted in any but deistic terms. Averroës has disallowed the validity of the heterogeneous and supernatural as a conception *sui generis*, both with respect to faith and with respect to miracle. But it is not a deistic, initial providence which is here at issue. This initial providence is, of course, a desideratum of any adequate account of the universe in its dependence on God as its Author; and over this question theism has no bones to pick with Aristotelian-Averroist deism; as with any honest deistic system for that matter. Theism, however, although it presupposes this providence tacitly, finds it insufficient for corroborating the claims of historical religions. Because, in the first place, these religions themselves are the manifestation of an historic providence *sui generis*; the manifestation of God's immediate intervention in history out of sheer condescending and gracious love. In this intervention there is implicit already the supersession, on the part of God, of His cosmically imposed role as Author and Preserver of the universe. In the second place, these religions claim that God intervenes directly and immediately in the course of cosmic events with a view to executing His designs and implementing the decrees of His sovereign love. Such is the case of miracle, historic revelations, the commission of prophets, and finally, the assumption of the human form by the Deity Himself. The speculative issue involved in this heterogeneous providence is not the purely logical or metaphysical account of what happens naturally in the natural realm. It is rather the issue of the supernatural and extraordinary impingement upon this realm of a

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heterogeneous dynamism rooted in God's generosity and love, rather than in the laws of the universe and the principles of its immanent development. And on this Averroës has nothing to say; because the issues arising out of this heterogeneous dynamism, he believes, are philosophically irrelevant.

### CHAPTER THREE

<sup>1</sup> On the deceptive character of sense-experience in Ash'arism, cf. *Guide*, I, Ch. 73, *Prop.* 12, pp. 132–3. Note on this question the famous critique of the validity of sensuous knowledge in Ghazālī's *Munqidh*, p. 72 f. This negative part of his critique is, without doubt, inspired by the arguments of the Greek sophists. With respect to the unreliability of deductive reasoning, we must add the Ash'arite notion of the contingency of the intellect which is attributed to Abu'l-Ma'āli (al-Juwānī) and Ibn-Hāzm by Averroës. *Tahāfut*, pp. 541–2.

<sup>2</sup> The definition of wisdom and knowledge in terms of causes is laid down in *Met.* II, 981b.; *Phys.* I, 184a, 10 f., and *Post. Anal.*, I, Ch. 2, and II, Ch. 2, by Aristotle.

Maimonides appears to be indebted to Averroës in the formulation of his critique of Islamic Kalām. His critique of the Ash'arite proof of creation *ex nihilo*; of their failure to demonstrate the existence of God, owing to their occasionalist presuppositions; of their scepticism and its nihilistic implications as well as their sophistical demonstration of the beginning of the world in time seem to be inspired by Averroës, as will become clear in the sequel. Maimonides departs from his master on a very important question: the rational indemonstrability of the beginning of the world in time, belief in which must be based on faith. Even this original solution of the problem is envisaged as a hypothetical possibility by Averroës in *Tahāfut*, pp. 96 and 95.

<sup>3</sup> Loc. cit., pp. 416–17 and 219–20. Against the Ash'arite doctrine of 'contingency of attributes' pertaining to things, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 476 and 530–1; cf. also, *Faṣl al-Maqāl*, p. 19, and *Kashf 'an Manāhij*, pp. 66–8, and *Com. on Met.*, ed. Bouyges, Vol. I, pp. 44, 886 and 1135–6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 520.

'Effects whose causes cannot be perceived are unknowable and are sought for on account of the fact that their causes cannot be perceived. If things whose causes cannot be perceived are unknowable and sought for by nature, then the causes of whatever is not unknowable are necessarily capable of being perceived. Only one who cannot distinguish between the knowable-in-itself and the unknowable-in-itself would (call this into question).'

<sup>5</sup> Cf. al-Ghazālī's account of the matter which we have examined at length: *supra*.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Tahāfut*, pp. 432 ff., for this Aristotelian doctrine of the Act, 'as the perfection of the substance-in-Potency and as the (*έντελέχεια*) of its being (Kamāl) since it is indistinguishable from it in act,' p. 433. This is how Averroës defines the Form, in relating the Peripatetic teaching on the distinction between Form and Matter. 'Form is the principle (*ma'nā*) through which a being comes to be; and it is that which the name and definition designate; and that from which the action proper to an existing being emanates. It is this action which reveals the existence of Forms in things' (*ibid.*). Averroës is in this whole passage setting forth the reasoning of the Peripatetics in positing the Pure Act, as the principle of movement and activity in the universe.

<sup>7</sup> This is how Averroës formulates the problem of Being and Acting and the nihilistic consequences of metaphysical monism: 'It is self-evident that things have quiddities and properties which entail of necessity the specific operations proper to an existing being and on account of which the quiddities, names and definitions of things are differentiated. Were an existing being devoid of a specific operation it would be devoid of a specific nature—and consequently shorn of a specific name and a specific definition. Thus things would become one thing and nothing at the same time. For the one is so designated on account of the action or passion proper to it; so that if it is conceded that it has a specific action, then it follows that there *are* specific actions emanating from specific natures. If, on the other hand, it is alleged to be devoid of a specific action, then the one is not one; and if the nature of the one is negated then the nature of Being would be negated . . . and the necessity of not-Being would follow.' *Tahāfut*, pp. 520-1.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 522.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 521-2.

<sup>11</sup> I will quote in full this central passage which I have attempted to outline here:

'Reason is nothing more than the knowledge (*idrāk*) of things through their causes, whereby it differs from other noetic faculties. Whoever repudiates causes repudiates reason. For the science of logic posits as an axiom that there exist causes and effects and that the knowledge of the latter is impossible without the knowledge of their causes. The abolition of these things, therefore, amounts to an abolition of science . . . ; because it implies that nothing is known with certainty but only conjecturally. Likewise, demonstration and definition as such would be impossible, since the essential predicaments upon which demonstrations rest are negated. Now whoever posits that there is no necessary science avows that his contention is itself not necessary' (*ibid.*, p. 522).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Tahāfut*, p. 215.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 531. Averroës writes:

'If there is nothing in being except the possibility of opposites, with respect to the agent and the patient, then there is no secure knowledge enduring for one instant of anything whatsoever. If we assume an Agent of this kind, who tyrannizes upon things like a despotic king whose word is law and for whom nothing is impossible in the width and length of his realm and to whose ways no law or habit can be assigned, then evidently the acts of this despot are

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necessarily unknowable. Even if an act is seen to be done by him, its continuity throughout a certain period of time is necessarily unpredictable.'

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 219 and 257. In both passages Averroës is arguing explicitly against the Ash'arites, who threaten to dissolve the identity of things and therefore their distinctions through their negation of the fixity of their specific determinations and powers. Cf. also p. 476.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 530–1, and note (13) above.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 220 and 158.

'The Ash'arites claim that every activity, in as much as it is activity, emanates from a willing, powerful, free, living, conscious Agent; because this is necessitated by the nature of activity itself . . . since activity cannot emanate from the lifeless but is the attribute of the living alone. Thus they repudiate the acts emanating from natural objects, and likewise the acts pertaining to living, visible agents. These acts, they claim, *appear* in correlation with the visible agent, but their real author is the Invisible Living Agent. This entails (contrary to their assumptions), that there is no life in the visible agent, since life is deducible from the acts of an agent; and what is more, *whence do they arrive at this judgment upon the Invisible Agent?*', p. 220.

The same argument is restated more fully in *Kashf*, p. 89.

<sup>17</sup> Averroës dwells at length on the negation of the causal determinations of things in its bearing on the demonstration of the existence of God, in *Kashf*, pp. 66–73. This negation, he argues, leaves us with no clue to the existence of God, since no 'reason or wisdom' can be said to inhere in the production of things and leaves the way open to belief in random. Loc. cit., pp. 68–9. The consequence of this position is either to repudiate the existence of the author of the universe altogether or the existence of such a wise, all-knowing author. Cf. p. 70.

<sup>18</sup> *Tahāfut*, pp. 220 and 158.

<sup>19</sup> This is the substance of Question III of *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* which is entitled: 'On the (Philosophers') Duplicity (*talbīs*) in speaking of God as the Author (*fā'il*) or Designer (*ṣāmi'*) of the Universe.'

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, cf. pp. 96–7 and 99, 100–2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>22</sup> 'Now when the teaching of the Mutakallims is scrutinized . . . it is seen that they have posited the Deity as an eternal man; inasmuch as they have assimilated the world to the products of man's will, knowledge and power. When they are told that (the Deity) must thus be a body, they retort: "But He is eternal and all bodies are in time (*muhdath*)"; and so they are driven to posit an "immortal man" who is the author of all things.' *Tahāfut*, p. 425. Compare *Com. on Met.*, pp. 200 and 206. On the inability of the Ash'arites to prove the incorporeity of God here referred to, cf. pp. 220–1, also Maimonides, *Guide*, I, Ch. 75.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Tahāfut*, p. 148.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

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<sup>27</sup> *Tahāfut*, p. 149. Averroës puts it: 'God wills through a will which is unlike (lā tushbih) the will of men . . . and knows through a knowledge which is unlike human knowledge. And as the mode (kaifiyah) of His knowledge is incomprehensible so is the mode of His will.'

Averroës returns to this problem frequently in *Tahāfut*, cf., e.g., pp. 150–1. Here he makes an explicit statement of belief in creation *ex nihilo*. 'The Philosophers,' he writes, 'believe that God . . . is distinct from the universe . . . and that He is not an agent in the sense in which the visible agent, whether voluntary or involuntary, is spoken of; but rather that He is the author (fā'il) of these causes, who brings forth the universe out of nothing and preserves it in a manner nobler and fuller than any of the visible agents.' *Ibid.*, p. 151.

This statement is difficult to reconcile with Averroës' account of creation as 'composition' (*tarkib*, p. 152); or as a process of 'bringing out from potency to act' (p. 149); or as 'correlation' (*irtibāt*)—'inasmuch as being is consequent upon correlation,' the two terms of which are said explicitly to be 'matter' and 'form' (pp. 180–1). In both instances Averroës is expounding with approval Aristotle's hylomorphic teaching on the question. On the *modus eminenter*, cf. also pp. 424–7, 450, 439 and 441.

The teaching of Aquinas on the mode of predicating analogical attributes to the creature and the creator comes very close to Averroës': cf. especially, *S. Theol.*, Ia, Q. 13, and *S. cont. Gent.*, I, 29, 34; *infra*, pp. 218 ff.

<sup>28</sup> *Supra*, p. 110. The former being the concept 'cause,' the latter being the concept 'design.'

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Tahāfut*, pp. 219–20.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92. That is how Averroës winds up his argument against the thesis that God could have created a world of a different magnitude than the world actually created. Cf. pp. 88–91. We will have occasion to return to this position and its deterministic implications. On same, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 412–13; also *Kashf*, pp. 32–3.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 475–6. Here Averroës is arguing against al-Ghazālī's contention that the determinations of things depend on the divine fiat as their sole determinant.

<sup>32</sup> Note the neo-Platonic account of the matter in *Tahāfut*, pp. 338–40.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Tahāfut*, p. 154.

<sup>34</sup> That is the Peripatetics and notably Aristotle, as is explicitly stated in more than one place by Averroës.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, cf. pp. 210–11; cf. also pp. 531 and 150 for a vindication of this theory of fourfold causality.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 433.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224; also p. 169. This formula recalls the famous Thomist formula to the letter: 'unde unumquodque agens agit secundum quod actu est'—*De Potentia*, Q. 1, a. i; also *S. cont. Gent.*, II, Chs. VI, VII, VIII, etc.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, pp. 120, 176, 182.

<sup>39</sup> The One (*Tό Πρώτον*) in the neo-Platonic scheme is to be distinguished from the First Intellect (*Noûs*), who is the first emanation from the One. Averroës calls it the 'One Separate Principle' or simply the One (*al-awwal*) (p. 217). The order of the universe is stated explicitly to depend on the First

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Intellect or *Noús* (*ibid.*); but it is clearly referable to the One (through the agency of this Intellect). Averroës is trying in this passage to prove that God is a simple Intelligence (*ibid.*, pp. 193, 185 and 434 ff.), and his procedure is certainly congruous with Aristotle's; for whom God is 'Thought thinking itself.' Although the intellectuality of the First Principle is not here in question, it is difficult to see how far Arabian, neo-Platonic Peripateticism, the Plotinian notion of the 'One' as a super-Intelligence, was identified with Aristotle's notion of God, as a Primary Intelligence. The notion of the super-intellectuality of the One of Plotinus is a mystical one which differs from Aristotle's notion of God. It is therefore difficult to see how in the perspective of Aristotelianism the First Principle and the First Intellect can fail to coincide. On super-Intellectuality of the One in *Plotinus*, cf. *Ennéades*, tr. Bréhier, Paris, 1925, III, 9, pp. 175 ff.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 217 and 352. This is how, in fact, Averroës resolves the conflict between al-Ghazālī and the Peripatetics (especially Avicenna). God's knowledge is altogether different from our own that no common term for comparison can be found. God's knowledge is 'cause of the known,' whereas ours is 'effect of the known.' In *Faṣl al Maqāl*, Averroës writes: 'This difficulty is resolved, according to us, by noting that the nature of eternal knowledge (sc. God's knowledge) in its relation to existents is different from temporal knowledge ('ilm muḥdath); inasmuch as the being of an existent is the cause and condition of our knowledge, whereas eternal science is the cause and condition of the existent in question,' p. 23; cf. also *Tahāfut*, pp. 352 and 462.

With respect to this distinction, Aquinas is in agreement with Averroës (cf. *S. cont. Gent.*, Bk. I, Chs. 49 and 50, *S. Theol.*, Ia, Q. 14. a. 5). Aquinas, however, criticizes the Averroist thesis on the ground that it detracts from the perfection of God's knowledge. Averroës, according to Aquinas, has not proceeded beyond ascribing a 'universal mode' of knowing singulars to God; since he teaches that God knows singulars in *communi*, that is, 'inasmuch as they are beings' (*S. Theol.*, Q. 14. a. 6. The reference is to Averroës, *In Met.*, Lib. xii, comm. 51, viii, 337a). This charge appears to be justifiable, as can be seen from Averroës' summary of the teachings of the Peripatetics on this question in *Tahāfut*, 462-3. Although Averroës concedes here a *modus eminenter* to divine knowledge, the object to which this knowledge is referred is explicitly an *ens eminenter* (*wujūd ash raf*).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. for the exposition of this theme, *Tahāfut*, pp. 433-6.

<sup>42</sup> On the teleology grounded in First Principle, cf. *Tahāfut*, p. 232.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *supra*.

<sup>44</sup> *Tahāfut*, p. 524. Averroës writes:

'It should not be doubted that things act upon one another and are generated by one another, although they are not self-sufficient, but rather depend upon a Transcendent Agent, who is the condition of their operation as well as their being.' Also *Kashf*, pp. 86-7, cp. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Najāt*, pp. 243 and 281.

<sup>45</sup> As an example of such accidents Averroës cites the so-called 'four natures,' namely, the dry and the humid, the hot and the cold. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 526.

Accidents, according to the Ash'arites, are continually generated by God, cf. *supra*. The controversy between Averroës and the Ash'arites revolves,

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therefore, around this very point. Averroës solves the difficulty by urging that the production of substances (*jawāhir*) is the exclusive prerogative of God, whereas the accidents are generated by natural causes. In this sense, God is said to be the sole Creator, or 'Inventor of substances.' Cf. *Kashf*, pp. 88-9.

<sup>46</sup> Averroës writes, *Tahāfut*, p. 131:

'The activity of the agent, according to the Philosopher (*sc.* Aristotle) is nothing other than (the process) of bringing what is in potency into act; in such a way that it has reference to being on both sides.' Cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 102, 156.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 221.

'The activity of the visible agent consists in converting a being from one character to another (*sifat*) . . . (that is) in bringing about its conversion into the form and the specific property through which that being is transmuted into an object of different essence, definition, name and operation.'

<sup>48</sup> Cf. pp. 180 ff. Expounding Aristotle's teaching on the manner in which the production of the universe must be ascribed to God, Averroës writes: 'The answer according to the Philosopher is that things whose being depends on their correlation, as in the case of Matter and Form and the correlation of the simple components of the universe, depend for their being on their correlation, so that the author of this correlation is the author of being.'

With respect to the preservation of the world in being, Averroës writes: 'But He is (*sc.* God) the Author of these causes, Bringer thereof forth from not-being to being; and Preserver thereof in a more perfect and more eminent mode than the visible agents' (*ibid.*, p. 151). The not-being here referred to is potential not-being (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 105, 131, 142), and the preservation is a preservation of eternal movement, cf. p. 168, where Averroës states explicitly that the 'essence of the universe is movement.' Cf. also pp. 59-60.

<sup>49</sup> *Supra*, p. 61.

<sup>50</sup> *Supra*, p. 85.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *Tahāfut*, pp. 520-1, where Averroës writes:

'Were an existing being devoid of a specific operation it would be devoid of a specific nature and consequently shorn of a specific name and a specific definition. Thus things would become one thing and nothing. For the one is designated thus on account of the action and passion pertaining to it. . . (So that if it is alleged) to be devoid of a specific action then the one is not one; and if the nature of the one is negated, then the nature of Being is negated too.'

<sup>52</sup> *Tahāfut*, p. 521.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 523.

<sup>54</sup> Koran, 35: 41.

<sup>55</sup> *Tahāfut*, p. 523. The reference is to Abu'l-Ma'āli (*sc.* al-Juwainī, d. 1085) and Ibn Hazm (d. 1064), cf. *ibid.*, pp. 541-2.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 523-4.

<sup>57</sup> *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, p. 287 and *supra*, p. 69

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* and *supra*, p. 69

<sup>59</sup> *Tahāfut at-Tahāfut*, pp. 537-8.

<sup>60</sup> The distinction here is between the 'Common Matter,' as the substratum of becoming in general, and the 'Signate Matter' (*materia signata* of Aquinas and the Scholastics) which represents the immediate substratum of any specific

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Form. Averroës calls the latter 'māddah khāṣṣah' (Specific Matter) the former 'māddah mushtarakah,' cf. *Tahāfut*, p. 531.

<sup>61</sup> 'The philosophers reject (this contention) and urge that were it possible, then wisdom would have enjoined that man be created without these intermediaries; since his creator in this manner would be the best and ablest of creators.' *Tahāfut*, p. 540.

<sup>62</sup> Averroës attributes this naturalistic interpretation exclusively to Avicenna, cf. *Tahāfut*, p. 515. Cf. the latter's 'Risālat fi'l-Fi'l wa'l Infi'lāl,' in *Majmū'* *Rasā'il*, and supra p. 69.

<sup>63</sup> *Tahāfut*, p. 514.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 515.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. *Tahāfut*, p. 527. This 'pragmatic theory' of religious truth whose validity rests upon the social role it plays in affording a 'social deterrent' (*wāzi'* *ijtima'i*) against unvirtuous conduct is expounded in pp. 581–6.

<sup>66</sup> Averroës writes: 'Not everything which is possible-in-itself (fi tab'ihi) can be performed by man. Because what is possible for man is clearly known; so that the greater number of things possible-in-themselves are impossible for him. The power of the prophet to perform a miracle (is to be reckoned among) things impossible-for-man though possible-in-themselves. But this would not justify the claim that things impossible-in-reason are possible, even for the prophet.' *Tahāfut*, p. 515.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 515–16; cf. also *Kashf*, pp. 73 ff. In the course of his examination of the claim of the Mutakallims that miracle represents conclusive evidence for the genuineness of revelation and prophecy, Averroës returns to the same point. Here he reduces the role of the prophet to promulgating moral laws (*wad' al-sharā'i*), loc. cit., p. 78, and miracle to the extraordinary manner in which such laws are set forth, as in the Koran (*ibid.*, p. 79). Other forms of miracle, such as healing the sick, Averroës argues, have nothing miraculous about them and do not, in any case, confirm the genuineness of the prophet's claims but rather his ability as a physician (*ibid.*, pp. 76, 78–9). The miraculousness of the Koran from its stylistic perfection is waived carefully aside (*ibid.*, p. 77).

<sup>68</sup> Cf., for instance, Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al Iqdām*, pp. 447–51; Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-Dīn*, pp. 183–4; al-Juwainī, *al-Irshād*, pp. 199.; al-Ghazālī, *Iḥiyā' II*, p. 346, etc.

<sup>69</sup> This is the substance of Averroës' own retort to the Mutakallims, in *Kashf*, pp. 74 ff. Averroës resolves the problem into two propositions: (1) A miracle has been ascertained, (2) whoever performs a miracle is a prophet. The 'major premiss' being actually gratuitous, no conclusion can be drawn from these two premisses (cf. *ibid.*, p. 76). In all this reasoning the *fact* of faith in supernatural revelation is tacitly presupposed. When Averroës turns to determining the miraculousness of the Koran in authenticating the prophecy of Muhammad he reduces this miraculousness to the superiority of the moral code promulgated in it. It is noteworthy that Averroës invokes the authority of the Koran in validating this thesis (*ibid.*, p. 78) succumbing thus to the dialectic of circularity. The qualification that a supernatural origin (*biwahyin mina'l-lah*) must attach to this moral code is vindicated on the grounds of the pragmatic thoroughness of Koranic law (*ibid.*, p. 80) and its extraordinary coherence and

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social usefulness (p. 81) which he corroborates from the Koran itself. Nowhere does Averroës seem to proceed beyond the genuinely ordinary and natural.

<sup>70</sup> Muslim consciousness has in general equated the miraculousness of the Koran with its stylistic perfection. Even learned theology fails to specify any other tenable ground of belief in *I'jāz* save stylistic perfection. I fully concur with Nöldeke (cf. Chapter II, on Koran in *Sketches from Eastern History*, Eng. trans., London and Edinburgh, 1852, pp. 34-7) that it is baffling that this claim for stylistic perfection should have been accepted with such docility by the greatest of Arabian authors and men of letters, when its legitimacy is all too unwarranted, even from a purely formal point of view.

<sup>71</sup> We have already touched on al-Ghazālī's teaching on this question, supra. For Aquinas's teaching:

*S. Theol.*, Ia, qu. 7, arts. 1 and 2.

*S. cont. Gent.*, Bk. I, Ch. 84.

*De Potentia*, qu. 1, arts. 3 and 4, etc.

<sup>72</sup> The tract in question is entitled: '*Fasl al-Maqāl fī ma bayna 'l-Hikmar Wa'l-Shari'* at *mindal' it-Tiṣāl*'. German trans. by M. J. Müller, München, 1875; Eng. trans. by M. Jamil-ur-Rehman, Baroda, 1921; French trans. by L. Gauthier, 3rd edition, Alger, 1948. Like the *Tahāfut* this tract was unknown to the scholastic doctors of the thirteenth century. It represents the only treatment *ex professo* of the subject by Averroës and is a work of definite originality. The *Tahāfut* was translated into Latin for the first time by Calo Calonymos in 1328 and was published in Venice in 1437: cf. Munk, *Mélanges*, pp. 435-6; and Rénan, *Averroës et l'Averroïsme*, Paris, 1866, p. 216.

<sup>73</sup> The major tenets of Latin Averroism as singled out in the condemnation of 1277 were: (1) the error of the two-truths; (2) the unity of the intellect (on this cf. Th. Aquinas's famous tract, *De Unitate intellectus contra Averroystas*—Latin text and French trans., in *Cryptes*, No. 16, Paris, 1857); (3) the eternity of the world; (4) the negation of creation *ex nihilo*; and (5) the negation of providence. The first condemnation of Averroism came about in 1270 and was confined to 13 propositions, which coincide roughly with the 20 Questions of al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut*. This was followed in 1277 by the final condemnation by Etienne Tempier, Bishop of Paris, at the instance of Pope John XXI, of 219 propositions which were declared erroneous and heretical. Three significant propositions which figure among the 13 propositions condemned in 1270 ought to be cited here because of their bearing on what we have called Averroist determinism. These are the propositions relating to the negation of providence and of free will. Prop. 3 runs thus: 'Quod liberum arbitrium est potentia passiva non activa; et quod necessitate movetur ab appetibili.' As to the negation of providence, Prop. 12 runs thus: 'Quod humani actus non regnatur providentia Dei.' Note this prop.: 'Quod omnia, que hic inferius aguntur, subsunt necessitate corporum celestium' (Prop. 4). Compare with this Q. 16 (pp. 254-8) of al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut* and the retort of Averroës in *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, pp. 495-500. Also, supra, p. 96. In the condemnation of 1277, the neo-Platonic contention that the multiple cannot emanate from the One is also singled out. (Prop. 44; cp. *Tahāfut*, qu. 3, third

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argument, pp. 110–32, and *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, ibid., pp. 173–263.) (Note especially Averroës' own position (pp. 180–2), as well as the whole series of corollaries of neo-Platonic emanationism (cf. Props. 95, 94, 59, 54, 43.) On determinism and the negation of contingent causes altogether, cf. Props. 197, 195, 60, 206, 21, 59. On the negation of providence and of the possibility of direct divine intervention in nature, cf. Props. 63, 43, 54, 160. Cf. P. Mandonnet, *Siger de Brabant*, Louvain, 1908–11. For a list of the propositions condemned, op. cit., Pt. II, pp. 178–84, and Pt. I, p. 111.

An interesting tract, *De Erroribus Philosophorum*, attributed generally to Gilles de Rome (cf. Rénan—*Averroës et L'Averroïsme*, p. 349—a thesis contested by Mandonnet in loc. cit.), lists the errors of Averroës under thirteen items, which coincide with the main propositions condemned in 1277; notably, the eternity of the world, the falsity of all religions: ‘Quod nulla lex est vera, licet possit esse utilis’—No. 2: cf. *Siger de Brabant*, Pt. II, pp. 10 and 8–9; also Rénan, op. cit., pp. 349–52.

<sup>74</sup> Op. cit., pp. 13 and 15.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. Averroës actually distinguishes four modes of dialectical reasoning employed by theology (al-Shari‘ah):

(a) Dialectical or rhetorical arguments whose premisses though not apodeictic are commonly known or believed, but the conclusions of which are nevertheless apodeictic. Reasoning from these conclusions is illegitimate, however. Religious propositions belonging to this category ought not to be interpreted allegorically (the verb is *awwala* or *ta’awwala*).

(b) Arguments whose premisses, though commonly known or believed, are apodeictic; and whose conclusions are instances (*mithlāt*) of what they are in fact designed to prove. These can be interpreted.

(c) Arguments, whose premisses, on the contrary, are not apodeictic; but whose conclusions coincide with what they are meant to prove. The premisses of these arguments can be interpreted but not their conclusions.

(d) Arguments whose premisses are not necessarily apodeictic, and whose conclusions are instances of what they are designed to demonstrate. The duty of the Elect (*Khawāṣ*) is to interpret these, of the vulgar to accept them *ab extrinseco* (al-ḥaml’ala al-zahir).

The general principle, Averroës concludes, is ‘that whatever cannot be attained except through demonstration, in matters susceptible of allegorical interpretation, ought to be interpreted by the “Elect,” but ought to be accepted by the vulgar *ab extrinseco*’ (ibid., p. 16).

<sup>76</sup> Aristotle draws a general distinction between demonstrative (or scientific) and sophistical knowledge: cf. *An. Post.*, Bk. 1, 2, p. 71b, and *Topica*, I, 1, p. 100a. The whole of the *Posterior Analytics* is devoted to demonstrative reasoning, its nature and conditions. The *Soph. Elenchis* opens up with this distinction between genuine and sophistical reasoning. Sophistical arguments are divided into: Didactic, Dialectical, Examination-arguments and Contentious arguments. Aristotle defines dialectical arguments as follows: ‘Those that reason from premisses generally accepted, to the contradictory of a given thesis’ (loc. cit., Ch. 2, p. 165b); or as ‘reasoning from opinions that are generally accepted’ (*Top.*, Bk. I, p. 100a). The nature of rhetorical reasoning

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is expounded in Bk. I of *Rhetorica*. Here Aristotle sets Rhetoric in contrast with Dialectic, in the genuine sense of rational argument (p. 1354a). Both, Aristotle believes, are concerned with matters 'that come more or less within the general ken of all men' (*ibid.*).—Note the contrast with Averroës' position. That rhetoric achieves its ends by playing on the emotions of men is stated explicitly in pp. 1356a–1445, followed by a discussion of the emotions in their relation to persuasion in Bk. II, Ch. 2–11.

<sup>77</sup> *Fasl*, p. 17. On scholastic theology (Kalām) as dialectical; cf. also *Kashf*, p. 47.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. op. cit., pp. 21 and 6; also *Kashf*, pp. 58–9.

<sup>79</sup> *Fasl*, pp. 6 and 7.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *Tahāfut*, pp. 582–6. After expounding the agreement of philosophy and theology on the question at issue (viz. resurrection), Averroës writes:

'It is manifest from this that all the philosophers hold this opinion with respect to religion: namely, that the prophets and lawgivers ought to be followed in the matter of the practical principles and the legal precepts of any given creed. According to them, the more these necessary principles represent an incentive to virtuous deeds, the more commendable they are' (*ibid.*, p. 584).

Note also this passage:

'All this, to my mind, is an encroachment upon the domain of religion and a scrutinizing of what is not enjoined by any religion, owing to the incapacity of human faculties to attain to it. For not every science on which religion is silent should be scrutinized or the "vulgar" informed of the results attained by speculation . . . because this would lead to great confusion. . . . Such is the case of the Lawgiver (God) who imparted to the "vulgar" only a measure (of knowledge) conducive to their happiness' (*ibid.*, pp. 428–9; also pp. 357–8).

<sup>81</sup> Averroës reproaches al-Ghazālī in more than one place for divulging the hidden secrets of 'demonstration' to the 'vulgar,' since the knowledge of these secrets pertains exclusively to the specially gifted (al-rasikhūn fi'l-'ilm): cf. *Tahāfut*, pp. 357, 528, 463, 108, 428, and *Fasl*, pp. 3 and 14, etc.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. on the question of faith in its relation to reason: *S. cont. Gent.*, Bk. I, Chs. 3, 5, 7; *S. Theol.*, Ia, qu. 1, as 1 and 8; II–II, qu. 2, as 3 and 4; *De Trinitate*, qu. 3, a. 1, etc.

<sup>83</sup> Averroës himself concedes this transcendence of revelation, at least nominally in *Tahāfut*, p. 428.

<sup>84</sup> On this Thomist solution of the problem, cf., e.g., Gilson, *Le Thomisme*, p. 8 f.; *Phil. au Moyen Age.*, pp. 528 ff. Maritain, *Degrés du savoir*, Ch. V, I, etc.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. supra.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Roland-Gosselin, *Le de Ente et Essentia de St. Thomas*, p. 65, and *al-Najat*, p. 184; cf. Farābī-Arā' Ahl al-Madīnah, *al-Fāḍilah*, Leiden, 1895, p. 64 f.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, pp. 37–8 et seq.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 96–7 and 101.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. supra. It is noteworthy that the neo-Platonic notion of necessary emanation is taken over by Aquinas and adapted to the doctrine of the procession of the Divine Persons, whereas voluntary activity is adapted to the doctrine of

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creation. The emanation of the Second and Third Persons from the Father is called 'procession'; the emanation of the creature called 'creation.'

<sup>90</sup> Cf. *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 13, arts. 5 and 6; *S. cont. Gent.*, Bk. I, Chs. 30, 32–4. On will and freedom in God, cf. loc. cit., qu. 19, arts. 1 and 10.

<sup>91</sup> Averroës declares overtly his departure from Avicenna and Al-Fârâbî over the emanationist scheme: cf. *Tahâfut*, pp. 179–80 et seq., 229 et seq., 245–50, 259–62. In this respect he lines up with al-Ghazâlî in criticizing the arbitrary construction of the neo-Platonic galaxy of the Intelligences and the Planetary spheres. In the course of his exposition of the neo-Platonists' procedure in formulating the scheme of the celestial emanations, while admitting that it is not demonstrative in character (*ibid.*, pp. 209 and 218), Averroës sets forth with tacit approval their motives in formulating this scheme: cf. *Tahâfut*, p. 209 f., and *Com. on Met.*, Bk. XII, Ch. 4, fol. 153–4.

<sup>92</sup> This is precisely how Aquinas explains the failure of the ancients to arrive at the notion of creation *ex nihilo*—in *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 44, art. 2; qu. 45, art. 2.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. *Topica*, Bk. I, Ch. 11, p. 10416; *Phys.* VIII, Ch. 1, 25ob 24 and 251b 17. Aquinas's defence of Aristotle over the problem of the eternity of the world, in *S. Theol.*, Ia, qu. 46, art. 1, might be valid within the limited, formal context in which it is raised. But seen in the perspective of the whole Aristotelian system with its irreducible distinction between Act and Potency, which coincides with the parallel distinction between Matter and Form, Aristotle's position can scarcely be said to be equivocal. In this respect, we believe, Averroës is truer to the spirit of Aristotle than Aquinas. Of course, to invoke isolated texts from Aristotle cannot settle the problem; for other isolated texts can be opposed to these—such, for instance, *Met.* XII, 1075b 34—where Aristotle states categorically that the world is eternal.

Maimonides' defence of Aristotle (*Guide*, Pt. II, Ch. 15) seems to be the direct source of Aquinas's. The two are, in fact, identical: cf. my discussion in *Muséon*, June, 1953.

<sup>94</sup> Supra, p. 26.

The origin of Maimonides' gibe against the Ash'arites can be found in Averroës, *Kashf*, p. 26. Averroës writes: 'The famous method (of the Ash'arites regarding the proof of the existence of God) rests on demonstrating that the world has a beginning in time (hâdith), which rests in turn on the theory of the atomic composition of bodies. . . . This method, however, is not demonstrative nor does it conduce to certainty concerning the existence of God. Now if we suppose that the world is created in time (hâdith), it follows as they say that it should of necessity have a Creator (muhâdith). But it is precisely this which is in question.' Op. cit., p. 26 et seq.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. *Tahâfut*, pp. 245–6.

<sup>96</sup> *Tahâfut*, pp. 495 and 497 ff.

<sup>97</sup> Op. cit., p. 10. Averroës writes:

'The second category is that which is a mean between these two extremes —sc. the world as a whole—this is a being which comes out of nothing and is not preceded by time.' This, however, is offset by arguments based on Koranic texts and purporting to show that creation *ex nihilo* and in time is not incompatible with Koranic teaching (*ibid.*, p. 11).

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<sup>98</sup> This is what Aristotle calls it. *Met.* XII, 1074a 35–8 and 1072a 24. Elsewhere he calls it the First Mobile, *Phys.* VIII, 260a 2—generally the ‘primary, eternal, single movement.’ *Met.* XII, 1073a 25. Averroës calls it simply the ‘heavenly body’—(al-jurm al-samāwī), *Tahāfut*, p. 59.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. for this argument, *Tahāfut*, pp. 58–9.

<sup>100</sup> Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, p. 60.

<sup>101</sup> Averroës, *Tahāfut*, p. 88.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95–7.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. *Tahāfut*, p. 68.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Physics*, VIII, 251a 10.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, III, p. 201a 10. This is the general Aristotelian definition of motion; the former being a mere application of the concept of motion to that which is in motion. Obviously, the ‘potential’ and the ‘movable’—as well as the ‘alterable’ (*ibid.*, 201a 12)—are interchangeable concepts in the Aristotelian scheme.

<sup>107</sup> *Physics*, VII, p. 251a, 18–21.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Averroës—*Tahāfut*, p. 97—al-Ghazālī’s text; as in *Tahāfut*, p. 66.

<sup>109</sup> *Tahāfut*, pp. 100–2.

<sup>110</sup> The former, because it is contradictory that not-Being itself should become Being; the latter because actualized Being is already Being in Act.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. *Tahāfut*, pp. 105–6.

The transition from not-Being to Being referred to above relates obviously to relative not-Being, that is of not-Being which is in potentiality to Being—and is the equivalent of potential Being: cf. *Tahāfut*, pp. 163–4.

<sup>112</sup> Averroës, *In Met.*, XII, 143a.

Averroës actually attacks the teaching of Islam, Christianity and Judaism on the creation *ex nihilo*—(opinio Loquentium in nostra lege et lege Christianorum: de qua Joahnes Christianus opinabat quod possibilitas non est nisi in agente). Elsewhere (overleaf *ibid.*) he refers to the ‘Loquentes trium legum, quae hodie quidem sunt, dicere aliquid fieri ex nihilo.’ His view, which he argues is that of Aristotle himself, is stated thus: ‘Dicimus sicut facit invenire, et est extrahere illud quod est in potentia in actum. . . . Et ideo dicitur quod omnes proportiones et formae sunt in potentia in prima materia et in actu in primo motore, et assimilatur aliquo modo esse eius, quod fit in anima artificis.’ (*ibid.*, 143b; cf. also *ibid.*, ix, p. 109a; *In Phys.* VIII, p. 155a).

Averroës returns to this question, with striking insistence whenever the occasion arises. This, as well as the notion of volitional activity in God, represents a recurrent theme in his polemic against ‘Loquentes nostra legis’ (cf. *In Phys.* VIII, p. 159a, 161b. Cp. *S. Theol.*, Ia, qu. 44, arts. 1 and 2, qu. 45, art. 1; *S. cont. Gent.*, Bk. II, Chs. 15, 16. *De Potentia*, qu. 3, art. 1). The clue to the Thomist solution of the problem of creation is the thesis that, contrary to the assumptions of Aristotle and Averroës, creation is not a form of mutation, but rather a mode of activity *sui generis*: cf. *De Potentia*, qu. 3, art. 2; *S. cont. Gent.*, II, Chs. 16, 17, 18.

<sup>113</sup> In *Fasl*, p. 10, Averroës points out that the ‘Philosophers’ and the Ash‘arites are in agreement over the eternity of God and the non-eternity of

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particular existents; but it is over the status of the world as a whole that they are in disagreement. Now with respect to the latter—he explains—they are all agreed that it comes out of nothing, is not preceded by time, and comes-to-be through an agent. With respect to time, the opinions of Plato and Aristotle are at variance: the former holding it to be finite, the latter infinite. After this analytical account, Averroës betrays his predilection for Aristotle's position by declaring that the universe is neither *really* eternal nor really temporal, since 'the really temporal is necessarily absurd and the really eternal is without cause.' In support of his thesis, Averroës cites different verses from the Koran (11: 9 and 41: 10) which suggest that the world always was (*ibid.*, p. 11). This is followed by the remark that such views are not, however, as incompatible as they appear, and accordingly should be approached with greater moderation, owing to the complexity of the matter.

<sup>114</sup> *Tahāfut*, pp. 96–7.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162. Averroës argues that the universe is not said by the Philosophers to be eternal *per se* (*qadim bil-dhāt*); since this would entail that it is uncaused. It is said to be eternal, rather, in the sense of being in 'continuous production,' and 'this is more appropriately referred to God than non-continuous production.' It was on this account that the ancient Philosophers opted for calling the universe eternal, he explains.

<sup>116</sup> The conjugal figure is Aristotle's; cf. *Phys.* II, 192a–22.

<sup>117</sup> *Tahāfut*, pp. 524 and 519–20.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *The Causal Dilemma and the Thomist Synthesis*

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#### I

##### CAUSALITY, PRIMARY AND SECONDARY

The Averroist-Ash'arite controversy recounted above can be described as an attempt to solve the problem of divine versus natural causality from two antithetical standpoints. Neither the deistic determinism of Averroës nor the theistic occasionalism of al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arites, however, can do complete justice to the radical question of divine versus natural causality. And yet, in a sense, both determinism and occasionalism are indispensable for any adequate conception of the Deity and His role in the universe. It is only the extreme claims with which they are loaded which renders them metaphysically and theologically suspect. From the standpoint of abstract, critical theology, it is imperative that God should be endowed with the attribute of infinite power. But this infinite power must be such as to be independent of any conditions inhering in the created order. For God's infinite power, being disproportionate with the created order, has unlimited scope *vis-à-vis* that order. Accordingly God's extraordinary intervention in the cosmic sphere is rationally possible because God's power can never be circumscribed by the conditions of concrete existence. Nor can the mode of this intervention be determined by the laws of cosmic becoming,

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because the mode of operation of His infinite power, instead of being determined by these laws, is their primary determinant. In this determination we have the clue to the definition of volitional activity, as activity which is rooted in the spontaneous determination of a free agent. Thus the infinity of God's power, the voluntary mode of His activity, and the possibility of His extraordinary intervention in the course of cosmic events are rational desiderata of any adequate conception of God's sovereign perfection and His role in the universe. And here al-Ghazālī's theological reasoning is sound in principle, despite its flimsy metaphysical drapery.

The infinite power of God, however, has one limit inhering in the divine Being itself, if not in the created order. If God's power is absolute, in relation to the created order, it is precisely because it is infinite and, therefore, disproportionate with the finite order over which it has infinite scope. Yet from the standpoint of the divine Being itself power, being merely one predicate of the divine perfection, is conditioned by God's other essential predicates, and notably His wisdom and His love. But this conditioning is not a limitation if by limitation is meant subordination or curtailment. It is purely the mode of operation of the divine Being, in the integral unfoldment of His essence in which analytical reasoning distinguishes wisdom, as the principle presiding over this operation, power as the energy flowing from this operation itself,<sup>1</sup> and love as the law of the outpouring of the divine goodness and the divine generosity. Thus the determinism inhering in divine activity is rooted in the Being of God Himself, who is wisdom and love, as He is power and will; rather than in the being of the creation, which represents the external scene upon which divine activity is displayed, as it were. And here the determinism of Averroës is valid in principle; at least as far as its conception of the rationality of God's mode of operation goes.

This rational determinism, however, although it accounts for the mode of operation of the divine will, leaves unexplained the outward manifestation of this power in the sphere of outward

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activity and creation. Divine power might be infinite and divine wisdom might be supreme, but the question would still remain: ‘*Why* should the divine essence be manifested outwardly at all? And what is the ultimate ground of the divine otherness, whereby God chooses freely to bring the creation forth out of nothing?’

Here we come upon the limits of the Averroist and the Ash’arite solutions of the causal dilemma. Averroës answers the question in part by urging that creation, as the manifestation of divine will, is grounded in a law of Reason to which God and the universe alike are subject. In this way, he closes the deterministic cycle in which the Creator and the creature are caught up. The second half of the question, regarding God’s providential intervention in the course of cosmic events, he dismisses as philosophically irrelevant; that is, pronounces it a pseudo-philosophic question. But Averroës has failed, in fact, to settle even the former half of the problem. The rational determinism which he postulates as the law of God’s activity and of cosmic becoming is clearly the *law* of this activity and this becoming, but not the *cause* of the emanation of things from God. In the former case we are told *how* God acts and *how* the universe develops, but not *why* God should act at all in the manner He freely chooses. And this is the burden of Averroës’ absolute determinism. But neither al-Ghazālī nor the Ash’arites have succeeded in settling the causal problem in a satisfactory way. In contradistinction to Averroës, they answer the latter half of the question in a *de facto* manner, by urging dogmatically and arbitrarily that God *acts freely because He acts freely*, and because the nature of divine power is such that He acts as He chooses to act. The determination of the *de jure* ground of this activity is dismissed as a pseudo-theological problem. Neither the how nor the why of the divine activity have thus been explained; and the problem has been surrendered dogmatically and agnostically as insoluble.

From the abstract standpoint of critical theology, a complete solution of the causal problem in its foregoing formula must be sought in the perspective of an integral conception of the Deity, as Power, Wisdom and Love. To put the matter epitomatically,

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the God of al-Ghazālī and his fellow Ash'arites is Power, the God of Averroës is Wisdom, and that is all. No wonder neither can give a complete answer to the question at issue. The ultimate ground of divine activity and the manifestation of the divine will, as we shall see, is the divine Love. Wisdom is only the law of this manifestation and power the principle of its efficacy. The God-Despot of the Ash'arites acts capriciously because He is capricious Power. The God-Philosopher of Averroës cannot even be said to act, owing to His total absorption in Himself and the contemplation of His essence. Yet neither a God, who acts capriciously, nor a God who is totally inactive, can be said to have any share in the fullness of the real Godhead.

We shall see when we turn to Thomas Aquinas that the causal problem is capable of solution in the very terms proposed above. The positive elements of theistic occasionalism and of deistic determinism, far from being surrendered, are incorporated into a complete synthesis in which the theological and metaphysical interests involved in the problem of God's relationship to the universe are fully met and satisfied.

## II

### AQUINAS AND THE LOQUENTES

The alleged conflict between divine and natural causality grew, in Medieval theological speculation, in East and West, out of two seemingly irreconcilable notions: the notion of God's universal providence and the notion of the efficacy of natural causes. We have seen how in Islamic theology the Ash'arites sacrifice the reality of the latter in favour of the former and how Averroës, on the other hand, while denying the possibility of any effective divine providence, affirms the reality of natural causes.

In the medieval West, the controversy which raged over Latin Averroism in the thirteenth century comprised, in addition to the question of the unity of the intellect, the eternity of the world,

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the doctrine of the two-truths, etc., the problem of divine providence versus determinism, as attested by the condemnation of Latin Averroism in 1277.<sup>3</sup> Aquinas seems to have had the exponents of Averroist determinism, on the one hand, and the exponents of Ash'arite occasionalism, on the other, in mind in his discussion of the problem of providence and causality in the *Summa contra Gentiles*, *De Potentia* and the *Summa Theologica*.<sup>4</sup> The question is treated with dramatic concreteness in the third book of the *Summa contra Gentiles*, on which our attention will be concentrated for the present. Here Aquinas is preoccupied with safeguarding the reality and universality of divine providence against the attacks of the fatalists and the determinists, who either, like the ancient materialists, denied this Providence or, like the Peripatetics, confined its scope to the world of incorruptible substances only.<sup>5</sup> The providence of the Almighty, Aquinas teaches, embraces all things so that nothing in the universe happens outside the order of this providence or contrary to it, not excepting singular and contingent happenings.<sup>6</sup> But this universal providence, contrary to the assumptions of the Stoics,<sup>7</sup> is not synonymous with necessity ( $\epsilon i \mu \alpha \rho \epsilon \nu \eta$ ). Contingency, evil, liberty, of choice—even chance and fortune, rather than infringe the universal jurisdiction of that all-embracing providence, represent in fact a vindication of His providence in which contingency and evil are comprised as part of the sovereign designs of the Almighty. The negators of providence find in the glaring reality of evil in life the ground of their disbelief in God and their despair of the righteousness of His ways.<sup>8</sup> But it is on account of their misconception of the nature of providence and the role it plays in the drama of cosmic becoming that their faith in the reality or the universality of this providence is shaken through the perception of evil in life. If evil and contingency reveal an indeterminism in the providence of the Almighty, it is an indeterminism grounded in divine love and generosity, rather than in the inefficacy of His power or the limitation of His foresight and fore-ordination. God graciously allows the creature to subsist on its own and to develop its life-process freely, as

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part of the ultimate scheme of things enjoined by the dictates of His love and generosity. And it is in this latitude, born of divine love, that contingency and evil are rooted, rather than in the powerlessness of the Almighty.<sup>9</sup>

It is no less a misconception of the nature of divine providence to hold that no mode of necessity can be ascribed to the order of being it is said to govern. A totally contingent order of being is thought to strengthen the case for God's absolute power and sovereignty, as the Loquentes maintain.<sup>10</sup> Yet an order of contingent being, like that contrived by these Loquentes, which does not endure for a single instant, depends avowedly on God for its incipient coming-to-be only. Beyond this the providence and power of God do not go. But it is more in keeping with the notion of this providence to hold that its scope extends beyond the initial production of things and embraces them throughout the whole process of their production, as throughout the process of their subsistence in being. A mode of necessity can thus be ascribed to things from the standpoint of God's own sovereignty, the vindication of which a metaphysics of contingent being is designed to serve. The Loquentes are obviously preoccupied with the vindication of this sovereignty in the formulation of this metaphysics of contingency. But contrary to their expectations, this sovereignty, far from being vindicated, is grievously impaired. The universe, as the workmanship of God, clearly bespeaks the might and perfection of its Author. It is true such a workmanship is far from being commensurate with the super-eminent perfection of its Author. Yet within the scope of the perfection freely assigned to it by the decrees of divine love, this universe is endowed with a measure of perfection and order which no scepticism can gainsay. Whatever detracts from this perfection, therefore, detracts from the perfection of its Author—or, in Aquinas's words: 'To detract from the creature's perfection is to detract from the perfection of the divine power.' Inasmuch as the repudiation of the causal efficacy pertaining to things is a detraction from their perfection, it is equally a detraction from God's perfection: 'since it is due to the abundance of its perfection

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that a thing is able to communicate to another the perfection that it has.<sup>11</sup>

Thus the Ash'arite metaphysics of accidents amounts to an impoverishment of the real and an infringement of the perfection of its Author. As we have seen at length in the first chapter, this metaphysics is embodied in four major tenets which Aquinas subjects to severe scrutiny. These are the passivity or inertness of substances, the exclusive reference of all causal operations to God, the intransmissibility of accidents and the contention that all production is creation.<sup>12</sup> Aquinas, as we have seen, derived his knowledge about the occasionalism of the Mutakallims from Maimonides' *Guide* with which he was fully familiar. His polemic against this occasionalism, as set forth in the *Summa contra Gentiles* and *De Potentia*, coincides in the main with the Maimonidean-Averroist polemic (despite his ignorance of the anti-Ash'arite polemic of Averroës in the *Tahāfut* and the *Kashf*)—at least with respect to the metaphysical and epistemological implications of this occasionalism.<sup>13</sup> Such, for instance, is his argument that the negation of causality militates against the possibility of knowledge, especially in the physical sciences; inasmuch as the nature of the cause is known through the nature of the effect.<sup>14</sup> Such, too, is his argument that action is consequent upon being actual; that the Form is the principle of activity in transitive operations,<sup>15</sup> etc. But this, Averroës, Maimonides and Aquinas share in common as the common bequest of traditional Aristotelianism. The uniqueness and originality of the Thomist critique of Ash'arite occasionalism consists in its completeness and, in this respect, it represents a positive advance on the Averroist critique. As we have hinted previously, the theistic occasionalism of al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arites sacrifices the metaphysical interests involved in the positive admission of causality as a primary predicate of being. Yet the rehabilitation of causality by Averroës, while it safeguards these interests, sacrifices the theological interests underlying this occasionalism and fails to give an adequate rational account of the possibility of God's direct intervention in the course of cosmic events, owing

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to the deterministic presuppositions upon which it rests. The merit of the Thomist solution of the causal dilemma consists precisely in this: that it does complete justice to the theological and metaphysical interests involved in the controversy over the causal principle.

The positive element in the Thomist synthesis, through which the solution of the causal dilemma is achieved, is the notion of love. This element is of Christian rather than of Aristotelian extraction. We shall see, when we examine this notion of love, as the principle of the divine otherness and the manifestation of the divine will, that it is metaphysically affiliated to the neo-Platonism of Dionysius the Areopagite. We have already said in the foregoing section that Averroism fails to fathom the depths of the mystery of divine otherness and activity altogether and thus posits a self-centred Deity who can hardly be said to act at all. The same charge can be levelled at Aristotle's own notion of God. And in this respect, al-Ghazālī's accusation, despite its naïve anthropomorphic implications, is a devastating accusation. From the standpoint of Aristotelianism and Averroism, it is indeed difficult to see *why* the Deity, who enjoys the everlasting bliss of contemplating His own essence, should utter Himself out in activity at all. A Deity, who is absolute wisdom, needs not issue out of the orbit of self-contained existence at all; since it is within this orbit that the Deity fulfils His essence through this interior movement of self-contemplation. If creation, as an instance of the divine otherness and the manifestation of the divine will is postulated, then it ought to be grounded in a principle *sui generis*, distinct from wisdom altogether. And thus there must inhere in the divine Being a dynamic principle of outgoing generosity, whereby He communicates His being and His causality to the creature out of sheer and gracious love.

It can be safely maintained, we believe, that the notion of a dynamic divinity, as indeed of a personal divinity, is of Hebrew, that is of Semitic, origin. Islam, therefore, in its conception of God as absolute power was true to the Semitic spirit in this respect, at least. And the reaction of al-Ghazālī to the notion of

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a wellnigh inactive Deity was quite in line with the Semitic genius. Yet al-Ghazālī in surrendering the Peripatetic notion of the Deity as wisdom surrenders a positive element in any adequate conception of the divine life. His conception of the Deity is a dynamic conception it is true; but it is a dynamic conception which has not been fully rationalized. Clearly God ought to act, since an inactive Deity is either a powerless or a jealous Deity. But it is not clear why the activity of this Deity should be devoid of all wisdom and rationality. Nor is it clear why a God who is power cannot also be wisdom. The error of absolute creative voluntarism, as of absolute creative determinism, rests on a false disjunction, which in both its aspects is detrimental to the conception of the fullness of the divine life.

It might be urged by the advocates of creative voluntarism, as is tacitly presupposed by al-Ghazālī, that the notion of wisdom threatens to introduce a positive limitation on the free movement of the divine will and the divine power and thus impair the divine perfection. Yet there is latent in this contention a positive misconception of the nature of wisdom in its relation to activity. There is limitation whenever an *extrinsic* principle impedes the progress of an agent or restricts the sphere of its movement. Such a limitation can be described as violent, inasmuch as it violates the laws of the free movement of the agent whose action it impedes. And avowedly this impediment or restriction is derogatory of the notion of free activity, when predicated of God. But there is no limitation when an *intrinsic* principle presides upon the activity of a free agent, as the law and principle of its natural operation. For activity can be intelligent or rational, without thereby ceasing to be free activity; so that the dilemma of freedom and finalistic, rational determinism is a false dilemma.<sup>16</sup> It is, therefore a grave error to hold that free, rational activity—even when predicated of an absolute Agent— involves any contradiction, as the advocates of absolute voluntarism allege. There must inhere in the activity of an intelligent, free agent a principle of wisdom or rationality as the interior law of its development, without which activity loses the eminent

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dignity of *rational* activity. As such, this principle enters into activity as a constituent element thereof, rather than as an alien, impeding factor which impairs its integrity or reality. And even if a necessity, dictated by the conditions of rationality itself, is found to supervene upon the agent in this process such a necessity would not be the 'bad necessity' of extrinsic compulsion but is rather the 'happy necessity' which springs from within whenever the object of activity coincides fully with the aspiration of the will directed towards it, as its genuine goal and fulfilment.<sup>17</sup>

### III

#### CAUSALITY AS AN INSTANCE OF DIVINE LOVE AND GENEROSITY

In the course of his exposition of the causal dilemma in Chapter 70 of the *Summa contra Gentiles* (Third Book), Aquinas examines the objections which scepticism might raise against the notion of a dual causality, natural and divine, co-operating in the production of the same effect. The major objection which scepticism might raise is that of the simplicity of the ways of nature which does nothing in vain. 'We observe,' he writes, 'that nature does not employ two instruments where one suffices.' But the contention that divine and natural causality converge to produce the same effect amounts, in fact, to this: that two causes operate simultaneously where a single cause is sufficient; so that one of these causes seems to be superfluous. 'Since, then, the divine power suffices to produce natural effects, it is superfluous to employ for the production of the same effects the powers of nature also; or if the forces of nature suffice, it is superfluous for the divine power to work for the same effect.' The solution of this dilemma rests on two divergent lines of reasoning. The first of these is the perception of a law of subordination in the hierarchy of causes, whereby the series of inferior causes itself depends on the Primary Cause for its being and operation. The

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second is the notion of God's infinite goodness and generosity whereby He communicates to things His likeness 'not only in the point of their being, but also in the point of their being causes of other things.'<sup>18</sup>

We are here face to face with a principle of far-reaching consequence to the understanding of the causal problem. We have already examined briefly the problem of Being and Act in their reciprocal relationship.<sup>19</sup> Being and Act, we argued, are somehow related one to the other inasmuch as Act is somehow revelatory of the nature of Being. But the discernment of this revelatory character of the Act did not proceed beyond postulating a 'conditional law' of correlation between Act and Being. Unless the Act were to utter Being, we reasoned, Being would remain mysterious and hidden. The consequent is contradicted by the testimony of experience and the actual reality of knowledge; therefore the antecedent must be valid and Being must utter itself in Act. This process of reasoning remains, however, hypothetical and indirect, since scepticism challenges the actual reality of knowledge and consents to bear the burden of this nihilistic repudiation of knowledge by admitting the validity of the consequent of the foregoing conditional proposition. Thus the *reductio ad absurdum* of this position which we have attempted remains of no avail, unless the reality of knowledge is conclusively established or a primary metaphysical law presiding on the relationship between Being and Act is discovered. The positive enshrinement of the reality of knowledge can of course be successfully achieved, in the face of nihilistic scepticism. Scepticism cannot escape the reality of knowledge without loading itself with the 'burden of proof' and thus abandoning its position of arm-chair nihilism. To disprove the reality or possibility of knowledge the sceptic has to erect a whole metaphysical edifice in which this possibility is discounted on grounds pertaining to the nature of the real, or to the nature of the relationship between subject and object. But this can be vindicated only on the supposition that the positive knowledge of this nature and this relationship is possible. In this way scepticism slips imperceptibly into the

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camp of positive metaphysics, playing naïvely thus into the hands of its own foes.

Now the refutation of scepticism would naturally strengthen the case for causality, since this refutation is bound up with the thesis that knowledge is possible only in causal terms. But causality would remain, in this manner, a purely hypothetical principle whose validity is ascertained inferentially through a process of backward transition from Act to Being, as it were. In order to achieve a categorical vindication of the causal principle we must reverse this procedure. We must attempt an *a priori* deduction of causality from the notion of Being. Of course the positivity of knowledge cannot be surrendered for a single moment; inasmuch as the *a priori* procedure no less than the *a posteriori* presupposes this positivity. But the *a priori* procedure has the great merit of demonstrating the reality of a concept in terms of a more primary concept; in this case, of Act in terms of Being, rather than *vice versa*.

In discussing the problem of the alleged correlation between Act and Being, the question presented itself as a question of relevance. 'What is the justification,' we urged, 'of the claim that Act is *even* relevant to Being?' This question is clearly an epistemological question; or at least, a question which can be satisfactorily answered in epistemological terms, as we have seen in postulating knowledge as the 'middle term' in the relationship between Act and Being. But now we are confronted with a question of a purely metaphysical character, which nevertheless presupposes the former. Even if it is conceded that Being utters itself in Act, one might still ask: 'What is the ground of this self-revelatory utterance on the part of Being, and *why* should Being utter itself in Act at all? The epistemological answer to this question is insufficient, because it does not go beyond proposing an external justification of the self-utterance of Being; a justification, that is to say, which is meaningful from the standpoint of an external observer, hypothetical or real, only. The substance of this answer, as we have seen, is that being would remain hidden, unless it is revealed in activity. Yet whether Being remains hidden or not

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has no bearing on Being itself, independently of a hypothetical knower. The metaphysical question here proposed, therefore, goes beyond the sphere of an external consciousness in which Being finds its reflation, and endeavours to find in the nature of Being itself the ground of a dynamic procession beyond itself.

This dynamic procession of Being is rooted in the inner structure of Being in its affiliation to the Good. The first mode of this procession is the self-revelation of Being in intelligibility by virtue of its inner benevolence. This is what one might call the intrinsic luminosity or radiance of Being—the luminosity and radiance of Being, as identical with the True.<sup>20</sup> But this luminosity of Being is only the first mode, in fact the superficial mode, in the process of the self-revelation of Being; since the radiance here described is the radiance of mere representation. The most primordial self-revelation is that of self-communication or self-diffusion. Being communicates not merely its likeness whereby it is externally revealed in intelligibility, but likewise communicates its very substance, overflows with its innermost perfection: the perfection of Being. In this way things are invited, as it were, to share in the plenitude of its life, graciously and benevolently. And herein consists the ultimate mystery of Being as Goodness, that it is communicative of self.

As I have hinted previously, the notion of the self-communication of the Good and of Being, which represents the coping-stone of the Thomist doctrine of causality and creation, as will become clear in the sequel, is of neo-Platonic extraction.<sup>21</sup> Its roots can be found in Plato himself. It is well known how in Platonic ontology the Idea of the Good represents the ultimate source of the intelligibility and the being of all things, as the sun represents the ultimate source of the luminosity and generation of sensible things.<sup>22</sup> This central role Plato assigns to the Idea of the Good in order to found the galaxy of his manifold Ideas in a principle of Unity—which stands to the former as first principle, as ontological *Prius*, in the absolute sense.

Once this firstness of the Good is conceded the question naturally arises: 'Why indeed should the Good, the Primordial

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and Everlasting Existent, bring forth into being this Ideal Galaxy, or even the world of shadowy existence of which this galaxy is the prototype? Plato envisages this problem in its entire acuteness in the *Timaeus*. The world of Being admittedly always was and is the same; the world of Becoming is always in a process of becoming and perishing. ‘Now everything that becomes or is created must of necessity be created by some cause, for nothing can be created without a cause.’<sup>23</sup> The universe, therefore, must of necessity be created and have a beginning. But when this is posited as a premise, the previous question recurs in its total concreteness. The Creator has avowedly always been, and so have the Patterns upon which His gaze was fixed in fashioning this universe. ‘Yet why should the everlasting Creator choose to bring this universe of transient things out of the darkness of eternal nothingness at all? And why should he impart to it the perfection of Being, Form and Intelligibility which pertain to him, in the first instance, alone?’— Because, Plato retorts, the Creator was good, ‘and no goodness can ever have any jealousy of anything. And being free from jealousy he desired that all things should be as like himself as possible.’<sup>24</sup> Here we have the ultimate clue to the mystery of creation. Creation is the manifestation of the boundless generosity and benevolence of the Demiurge, in whom there is no jealousy or niggardliness; and as such is a movement of free and outgoing love.<sup>25</sup>

The notion of the Good, as the ultimate ground of the emanation of things from their primordial fountainhead, was enshrined in neo-Platonic metaphysics, following the example of the Master as an elemental postulate. According to Plotinus the One is the superabundant store of all perfections, from which all things take their origin; the supreme reality which transcends Being, consciousness, activity and life while giving rise to all these things; the goal unto which all things yearn, while it desires nothing and yearns unto nothing. ‘All things act with a view to the Good, or on account of the Good, but the Good has no need of anything.’

The Intellect, the First-born of the One, turns to the One by virtue of the being and form it has received from it; but the One

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itself desires not for there is nothing towards which it could turn. ‘The Good has imparted to the Intellect . . . an image of itself, that is why there is a desire in the intellect. . . . But the Good desires not, for what could it desire? And it acquires nothing, for there is nothing for it to seek. It is therefore not the Intellect, because in the Intellect there is desire and yearning for its own form.’<sup>26</sup> And yet notwithstanding the superabundance of its riches and its brimful satiety it has generated all things. Like a stream without a source, it pours forth its waters unto all the rivers; but its waters are not thereby exhausted. Like the life which circulates in the veins of the tree without being spent away and which animates all parts of the tree while it abides motionless in the roots, it gives life to all things while remaining distinct from all things and stirs in all things while remaining motionless and indiscernible.<sup>27</sup>

The teaching of Plotinus was transmitted to the West through the *Liber de Causis*, an Arabic recension of Proclus’s *Elementatio Theologica*.<sup>28</sup> The doctrine of the self-diffusion of the Good is stated in an eloquent way by Proclus. ‘Everything perfect,’ he writes,<sup>29</sup> ‘proceeds to the generation of those things which it is able to produce, imitating the One Principle of all. For as that on account of its own goodness, unically gives subsistence to all beings (for the good and the one are the same so that the boniform is the same with the unical), thus also those things which are posterior to the first, on account of their perfection, hasten to generate beings inferior to their own essence. For perfection is a certain portion of the Good, and the perfect, so far as it is perfect, imitates the Good.’

Aquinas, who wrote a commentary on the *Liber de Causis* in 1268,<sup>30</sup> was fully familiar with the thought of Proclus. Yet it was primarily through the *Divine Names* of Dionysius the Areopagite that the doctrine of the self-diffusive character of the Good found its way to the Thomist system, as evidenced by the innumerable references of Aquinas to that work whenever the problem recurs in his works. In addition to the *Liber de Causis*, the *Divine Names* and the *Mystical Theology*—transmitted to the Latin West in the

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ninth century by Erigena, represent the main indirect channel through which neo-Platonism reached the thirteenth century Scholastics and consequently Aquinas himself.<sup>31</sup>

We cannot dwell at length on the neo-Platonic mysticism of the Pseudo-Dionysius, the great neo-Platonist of the fifth century.<sup>32</sup> We must, however, stop to examine his doctrine of the self-diffusion of the Good, as set forth in the fourth chapter of the *Divine Names*, which exercised such a decisive influence on the theology of Aquinas. The debt of Aquinas to the Pseudo-Dionysius is incalculable. With Aristotle and Augustine, Dionysius represents the mainspring from which the Thomist system takes its source. The Thomist doctrine of the *Via negativa* and the analogical predicateability of positive attributes to the Creator and the creature,<sup>33</sup> the Thomist doctrine of evil and the exclusive dynamism of the good,<sup>34</sup> the notion of the good as essentially self-communicative, the Thomist angelology,<sup>35</sup> the Thomist conception of causality as an instance of divine generosity, and finally the Thomist doctrine of love<sup>36</sup>—are all of direct Dionysian inspiration. Aquinas, it is true, recasts in precise technical language the intuitions of the Great Mystic, enunciated in symbolic mystical language.

The name ‘Good’ which scripture attributes to God, explains Dionysius, must be interpreted in a manner which sets the transcendent Goodness of the Divine Being apart from the goodness of all created things. For this Goodness is the source and fountain-head of all being and good. ‘As our sun through no choice or deliberation, but by the very fact of its existence gives light to all those things which have any inherent power of sharing its illumination, even so the Good (which is above the sun, as the transcendent archetype by the very mode of its existence is above its faded image) sends forth upon all things according to their receptive powers the rays of Its undivided Goodness.’<sup>37</sup> Hence the spiritual Beings (*sc.* the Angels) receive their being and blessedness and ‘pass on to those that are below them of the gifts which have come unto them from the Good’<sup>38</sup>—uttering in this way the Divine Silence. And hence rational beings derive their

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being and their intelligence, plants their life and lifeless things the quality of bare existence. In the Good are they all brought forth into Being and in the Good are they preserved. The Good is thus the Fount of all things, the source of their being and reality. And it is likewise the source of their preservation, of their beauty and order,<sup>39</sup> and even of their causality whereby they impart their being to other things.<sup>40</sup> In this capacity the Good can be described as the Efficient Cause of all things. Likewise the Good is the Beautiful unto which all things aspire, and as such is the Final Cause of all things. From it do they derive their harmony, cohesion and unity.<sup>41</sup> All dynamism, all motion or rest, all being and order are grounded in the Good and Beautiful, as their Efficient, Formal and Final Cause, which is above all rest and motion, through which all rest and motion come, and from which and in which and unto which and for the sake of which they are. . . . Yes, all that exists and comes into being exists and comes into being because of the Beautiful and the Good; and unto this object all things gaze and by it are moved and conserved, and for the sake of it, because of it and in it existeth every originating principle—be this “exemplar” or be it final or efficient or formal or material cause—in a word, all beginning, all conservation and all ending, or (to sum it up) all things that have being are derived from the Beautiful and the Good.<sup>42</sup>

The sphere of the Good, therefore, embraces all Being, so that ‘all creatures in so far as they have being are good and come from the Good,’<sup>43</sup> and have Being in proportion as they participate in the Good.<sup>44</sup> Outside this sphere, there is only darkness, evil, not-Being. If the Good is the Fount of all being, then evil can generate neither being nor not-being; that is can be neither its own Source nor the source of its opposite. Unlike the Good which is pregnant with the infinite virtualities of its overflowing generosity, evil is barren, niggardly and impotent. All dynamism, all energy and all causality flow from the Good. Evil, *qua* evil, ‘causes no existence but only debases and corrupts, so far as its power extends, the substance of things that have being.’ And even this power for destruction and debasement it derives not from

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itself, but from the Good. ‘*Qua* evil, it neither hath being nor confers it; through the action of the Good, it hath being (Yea, a good being) and confers being on good things. Or rather . . . evil in itself hath neither being, goodness, productiveness, nor power of creating things which have being and goodness.’<sup>45</sup>

In the exact technical language of Aquinas, this profound insight of the Pseudo-Dionysius into the nature of the Good and of Being is stated in terms of convertibility. The Good and Being are convertible notions: things are in so far as they are good and are good in so far as they possess being.<sup>46</sup> Now if we were to enquire: ‘what is it that constitutes the being of an existing thing, in the Aristotelian-Thomist scheme,’ the retort would be Act or Form; since Act represents in things the principle of their perfection.<sup>47</sup> But Act, in the Aristotelian-Thomist scheme, is not only the principle of Being, it is likewise the principle of activity in existing things; the activity which flows from the superabundant perfection of Being. This is the basis of the Aristotelian-Thomist dictum that things ‘act inasmuch as they are in being,’<sup>48</sup> which, in the Dionysian scheme, corresponds to the dictum ‘things are and act inasmuch as they are good.’

The dynamic character of Being is thus rooted in the very essence of Being as self-communicative or self-diffusive. Whether this self-diffusiveness is explained in Platonic terms, as in the case of Dionysius and his predilection for the concept ‘Good’; or in Aristotelian terms, as in the case of Aquinas and his predilection for the concept ‘Act,— is immaterial to the major question at issue. Aquinas, in any case, achieves a reconciliation of the two concepts which, on the surface of it, leaves no serious dialectical remainder. Being, Good and Act are equivalent and convertible terms. If the Good is represented in Platonic and neo-Platonic speculation as the store of all perfections with which the Good overflows, owing to its superabundance and thus confers being, beauty and energy upon things, this same role can be ascribed in the Aristotelian scheme to the Act which represents the principle of Being and perfection in things.

The metaphysics of the Act, although it can be reconciled with

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the metaphysics of the Good, cannot be said to coincide with it completely. Thus Aquinas, even when he declares that Being, Act and Good are convertible notions, is nevertheless committed to an ontology which ascribes priority to Being *qua* Act, rather than to Being *qua* Good; and therefore ascribes a purely axiological or finalistic role to the good in its relation to being.<sup>49</sup> In this his faithfulness to Aristotle is demonstrated with striking vividness. It is noteworthy, however, that he endorses so readily the Dionysian concept of the Good as self-diffusive abundance that one might rightly wonder how far the discrepancy between the Good and the Act in metaphysical status was sufficiently realized by him. For the Good in the Dionysian ontology is an ontological First Principle; the Efficient Cause, as well as the Final Cause of all things—rather than an axiological or finalistic principle which plays a purely ethical role.<sup>50</sup>

What gives point to this observation is that the Act is enshrined as a First Principle in the Dualist metaphysics of Aristotle as a counterpart to Potency, which is set up as a parallel First Principle, co-eternal with the former. Here the chasm which separates the Aristotelian concept of the Act from the neo-Platonic concept of the Good is displayed to sight. The neo-Platonic metaphysics is a metaphysics of oneness, wherein the genesis of things is described, as it must needs be described in such a metaphysics—in terms of emanation from the unique principle of all Being, which transcends Being. But not such is the Aristotelian, dualist metaphysics in which the Pure Act represents the Final Cause, the object of desire unto which things yearn, rather than the Fount of Being. For it, an emanationist account of the genesis of things—if such an account is thinkable from the standpoint of Aristotelianism at all—can only be achieved at the cost of the most cardinal distinction in Aristotelianism, the distinction between Act and Potency, and consequently at the risk of surrendering the most decisive tenet of Aristotelian metaphysics.<sup>51</sup>

It should not be suspected here that our critique of the Thomist equation of Being *qua* Good and Being *qua* Act is inspired by any desire to surrender a positive gain which the Thomist

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synthesis of the neo-Platonic and Aristotelian elements achieves. For such would amount to a falling back on the irreducible dualism of Aristotle, with all the insoluble difficulties it raises;<sup>52</sup> and it is to the credit of Aquinas that his metaphysical vision on this, as on many a decisive issue, reaches beyond the limits of Aristotelianism. What we are endeavouring to show is that the unqualified identification of the neo-Platonic concept of the Good and the Aristotelian concept of the Act threatens to confuse the two distinct concepts. And this, as I have hinted previously, is one decisive issue on which Arabian, neo-Platonic, Peripatetism was involved in inextricable difficulties.<sup>53</sup>

Whatever our verdict on the Thomist equation of Being *qua* Act and Being *qua* Good, it must be conceded that, although the two concepts are of heterogeneous extraction, Aquinas utilizes them for his metaphysical and theological purposes with outstanding ability. The first perfection of things is the perfection of being which things derive from the First Being, who is unto all things the cause of Being.<sup>54</sup> This perfection is even prior to the Good, since Being is predicate of all things in Act, whereas good is predicate of things which participate in a certain grade of positive perfection only.<sup>55</sup> Both objectively and subjectively (*secundum rem et secundum rationem*) Being is prior to the Good; in the first case, because Being is predicated of a thing, inasmuch as it is in act *simpliciter*; in the second, because Being is what is first conceived by the intellect and what is designated by the name.<sup>56</sup>

God confers upon things the perfection of being, by reason of His superabundant generosity and goodness. As Efficient Cause, He bestows upon them His likeness by conferring upon them the title of existence; as Final Cause, He implants in them the desire to seek Him as their ultimate end or goal.<sup>57</sup> In this way, He is the principle and term of all things, their beginning and end. The paradox of the divine goodness and generosity is that God, notwithstanding His satiety and His self-sufficiency, has pleased to bring forth into being the whole creation freely and

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benevolently. For what other reason can be adduced for this movement of free love, save the divine munificence and liberality? Creation avowedly adds nothing to God whose essence exhausts all positive perfection. The *ultima ratio* of the manifestation of the divine will cannot, therefore, be said to consist in God's desire for the creature, as it were; but rather in the self-centred movement of dynamic and outgoing love which wells out of the bosom of the Deity, not out of penury or desire but rather out of satiety and superabundance.<sup>58</sup>

Yet the divine generosity does not manifest itself merely in the perfection of being. If things were endowed with being purely and simply they would be endowed indeed with a perfection which is proper to God Himself and thereby the divine generosity would be amply demonstrated. The infinity of God's generosity, however, is such that in addition to the perfection of being, He has conferred upon the creature the power to generate being, the energy whereby it can communicate its own perfection to other things. And in this is rooted ultimately the causality of things and the dynamic energy whereby they share in the divine essence. 'Things tend to be like God, forasmuch as He is good. . . . Now it is out of His goodness that God bestows being on others; for all things act forasmuch as they are actually perfect. Therefore all things seek to be like God, by being causes of others.'<sup>59</sup>

A metaphysics of inert being, like the metaphysics of the Loquentes, which strips created things of the predicates of dynamism and causal energy, represents thus a positive detraction of the perfection of its Author. It is, as we have seen, proper to being to communicate its perfection to other things. In bestowing being upon things, God can withhold from them what is proper to being only through jealousy or niggardliness. But this is incompatible with the notion of the boundless perfection and generosity of God; so that the causality of things must be conceded in the interest of divine perfection and sovereignty.<sup>60</sup>

The foregoing account of the self-diffusive character of being is a purely neo-Platonic account. 'How does Aquinas fit it into

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his Aristotelian, metaphysical scheme' must now be examined. The Act, in Aristotelian ontology, as we have already seen, is merely one constituent element of the real; whether the real is taken in its individuality, as manifested in substance, or in its totality, as manifested in the universe as a whole, Potency being the other element. Even in its capacity as Pure Act, the act plays only the finalistic role of the Immovable Mover unto which all things gravitate. Strictly speaking, therefore, the Act cannot be said to be 'cause' in the precise sense. For Aristotle the being of things is an irreducible, initial datum of which he offers no account. That is why he relaxes so complacently in the doctrine of the eternity of the world. The 'genesis of being,' according to him, calls for no account, because, in an absolute sense, there is no genesis of Being. What calls for a metaphysical account is Becoming: that is, the self-contained, circular movement of being endlessly and everlastinglly. And here the distinction between Act and Potency is more than sufficient to account for this circular movement and meet the Eleatic dilemma of the abiding identity of Being.<sup>61</sup>

In the Thomist scheme, however, such a conception of the problem is inadequate and incomplete. If the becoming of things calls for a satisfactory metaphysical account, much more does their being or genesis call for such an account. And for this to be achieved we cannot content ourselves with an account of the transition of things from potential to actual being, as in the Aristotelian doctrine of becoming. We must proceed beyond this and break through the circle of the self-contained endless movement of being, and thus settle the problem of the initial eruption of being into the sphere of actuality. Such an eruption, when its reality is fully scrutinized, is found to differ from becoming in precisely this respect: that it is neither transmutation nor change, since change implies a process from one term to another, and we are clearly confronted here with the problem of the initial genesis of being.<sup>62</sup> Consequently philosophy must reckon with a metaphysical problem which is even prior to the problem of becoming. In metaphysical language, this problem can be designated as the

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'problem of the genesis of being'; in religious language, as the 'problem of creation.'

Now note here in what relation Thomism stands to Aristotelianism over the problem of being and becoming. The Act-Potency metaphysics, formulated by Aristotle, is conceived with a view to solving the problem of becoming, and in this its success can hardly be gainsaid; especially when it is recalled how difficult the prospect of such success was made by Parmenides and the Eleatics. For the strict requirements of this metaphysics of becoming, the notion of Act as 'entelechy' and, in the last analysis, of the Pure Act, as ultimate Entelechy or ultimate Teleology, proved thoroughly adequate. Becoming, change, activity are interpreted, in the Act-Potency metaphysics of the Stagirite, as the transition of a real entity from a phase of incomplete perfection to a phase of complete perfection. And in this process the Act plays ideally the role of Final Cause; and effectively the role of Formal Cause.<sup>63</sup> But nowhere does Aristotle ascribe to this Act the role of efficient cause, the cause, that is to say, which confers being upon the entity in question. Such a prospect is precluded by Aristotle's very conception of motion, especially in relation to the whole universe which is, on Aristotle's showing, in a process of endless development.<sup>64</sup>

Aquinas, notwithstanding his integral acceptance of the Aristotelian metaphysics of the Act, professes a doctrine of creation in which this very notion of Act is central. One might wonder how on earth this notion, born in such unpropitious circumstances, could be employed in the vindication of a thesis repudiated so emphatically by the great representative of the Greek genius. Might it not be that Aquinas, then, succeeds in accommodating this concept of Act to the requirements of his metaphysics of creation only through a process of fraud? For how can a concept contrived to meet the requirements of a metaphysics of becoming be transplanted integrally into a higher order and employed in the settlement of a more acute problem, the problem of the genesis of being?

Here the whole weight of our foregoing accusation against

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Aquinas is brought out. Yet it ought to be remarked in all fairness that Aquinas succeeds in accommodating the Aristotelian notion of Act for his metaphysical and theological needs through a process of modification rather than fraud. And the justifiability of his procedure rests upon one major circumstance: the fact that Aristotle had left the way open for such an eventuality, perhaps inadvertently, through his notion of the Act, as 'Energy,' no less than 'Entelechy.'<sup>65</sup> Even for the purposes of his own metaphysics a notion of Act devoid of dynamism, like the notions of Idea and Being in Plato and Parmenides respectively, would have proved inadequate. This was one of the major scores, it will be recalled, on which Aristotle rejects the Platonic doctrine of Ideas.<sup>66</sup> If the becoming of things is to be satisfactorily accounted for, an 'energizing principle' must be introduced in which the dynamism of cosmic life could be rooted. And the Act *can* be made to play such a role, even though for the purposes of Aristotle such a role is not altogether indispensable; inasmuch as the dynamism latent in things is rooted in the yearning of Matter (on account of its penury: *στέρησις*) for the fullness of the Pure Act, which represents the 'Final Cause' towards which all cosmic movement and becoming gravitate.

But to achieve this, as we have hinted previously, the Aristotelian concept of Act had to be recast in neo-Platonic terms. Aquinas, therefore, succeeds in conceiving of the Act as communicative or diffusive of itself by viewing it through the prism of the Dionysian concept of the Good. In this way he succeeds in corroborating the validity of the equation Being-*qua*-Act with Being-*qua*-Good. The procedure of Aquinas in this corroboration need not arouse any surprise. The God of the Pseudo-Dionysius is absolute Goodness, the God of Aristotle is Pure Act. But clearly it is the same God who is here envisaged from two different metaphysical standpoints. In any case, this is precisely the point of the claim which can be successfully defended that Aquinas achieves a positive synthesis of Aristotelian with Christian metaphysical and theological presuppositions—a synthesis in which neo-Platonism indeed finds as prominent a place,

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we believe, as Aristotelianism where the conception of the divine nature and of divine activity and creation is concerned.

Now if in God the predicates Act, Being, Good are submerged in the unity of the divine essence, then God's activity cannot be dissociated from the notion of God's Being or set up as a quality of the divine Being effectively distinct from the divine Essence. Rationally, of course, we can distinguish in God between Being and Operation; but only rationally, since otherwise we threaten to impair the unity and simplicity of the divine Being.<sup>67</sup> Owing to the fullness of His Being and the superabundance of His Goodness, God unfolds His Essence in the twofold movement of procession and creation, while remaining fully within Himself, as it were. In explaining the procession of the divine persons from God in *De Potentia*, Aquinas argues that since it belongs to the nature of what is in act, to communicate itself as far as possible, it follows that God who is the fullness of Act (*maxime et purissime actus*) must communicate His Being in the divine persons.<sup>68</sup> In the *Summa contra Gentiles*, creation is described also in terms of self-communicative actuality. Inasmuch as every agent acts according as it is in act, and inasmuch as it inheres in the nature of the perfect to communicate its likeness to other things,<sup>69</sup> he argues, God creates things by communicating to them the fullness of His perfection which is Being.<sup>70</sup>

Here a radical difficulty arises. The account of activity in terms of self-communication might be legitimate in the case of God, because in Him the Act of Being is identical with the Act of Being-Good, and the self-communicative character of the Good is not here in question. In the creature whose being is not identical with its goodness, on the assumption of Aquinas,<sup>71</sup> such an account would seem totally unwarranted and our analysis of causality would gain nothing from the conception of the self-diffusive character of the Good in which we endeavoured to find the ultimate roots of causality. In order to resolve this difficulty we have only to widen our conception of the Act in its relation to the Good; and thus load it with the character of an *a priori*

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principle. Even in the unique case of God, the legitimacy of the argument from the self-communicative character of the Good as Act derives from the circumstance that activity is rooted in the Good as such and is commensurate with it. It is true that in God these two terms coincide, because in Him they attain the degree of superlative perfection. But clearly even in God the legitimacy of this contention would be unwarranted, unless the equation of Goodness and Act were accepted as an *a priori* postulate. The self-communication of Act is not predictable of God, because He is God. It is rather because Act, *qua* Act, is self-communicative of its essence by virtue of its affiliation to the Good, that God can be said to act, because He is good. So that wherever a measure of actuality, however minimal, is found in an entity, action can be seen to emanate from this entity by virtue of its intrinsic goodness. The only special position that God occupies in this relationship of actuality to operation is that of eminence. Because He is Act, complete and entire, God can act in an absolute sense and confer upon things the absolute predicate of Being—a role which no particular created agent can perform.<sup>72</sup> But created agents *can* act proportionately to the exact measure of actuality proper to them, and it is in this precise respect that they differ from God.

It is only in this way that the reality of causality, as a predicate of the Creator and the creature, can be saved. Causality is not predictable of God arbitrarily, as it were; that is, by reason of His sheer divinity and sovereignty. For if so, then the predictability of causality to the creature would be unwarranted and the pretensions of scepticism would be justifiable after all. But the dramatic, metaphysical predicament in which scepticism—as we have seen in the case of al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arites—is caught up is that its procedure in predicating the causality of the Creator Himself is found, upon close scrutiny, to be wholly unjustifiable. How, indeed, can we speak of a causal relationship between God and the universe (as, in fact is implied in speaking of God as First Cause of the universe) when the causal principle itself is without validity? Or, perhaps, the relationship of authorship in

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which God stands to the universe is not, strictly speaking, a causal relationship; since God as the Author of the very being of things, stands to the universe in an absolutely unique and incomunicable relationship. Yet this thesis, rather than invalidate the predicability of causality to the Author of Being, raises a serious issue which must now be examined: 'In what precise relationship does causality stand to Being, absolute or relative, essential or accidental?' 'And what is the precise character of this relationship itself: Is it a univocal, homogeneous character; or is it one which must be described in other terms, dictated by the actual character of Being with which the meaning of causality is said to be bound up?'

We will postpone the settlement of these two questions for the time being. What we have gained by raising them at this point is a vivid awareness of the inescapability of viewing causality in the perspective of Being. The significance of this discernment for Thomist epistemology and metaphysics becomes evident the moment it is recalled that the legitimacy of the empirical procedure of Aquinas in demonstrating the existence of God and determining His attributes is bound up with the admission of a causal relationship between God and the universe, as grounded in the very nature of Being. It is because our analysis of Being, as empirically given, reveals the existence of certain universal determinations pertaining to Being, as such, that we are able to rise from the finite to the infinite and load it with positive content, without exposing ourselves to the charge of groundless constructions. Only in an 'arbitrary' ontology can causality be attributed to God and denied to the creature, merely on the strength of God's exclusive uniqueness and sovereignty.

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### IV

#### THE ROLE OF CAUSALITY IN THE LADDER OF ANALOGICAL ASCENT FROM THE FINITE TO THE INFINITE

We have remarked, in discussing Aristotelian dualism and the difficulties it raises for any positive doctrine of creation, that the latter is possible only in monistic terms. Now whatever our procedure in determining the existence of a First Principle from which things can be said to originate, this First Principle must evidently be the chronological and logical 'Prior' in a process which is described as creation. A monistic ontology, like that of Plotinus and al-Ghazālī, starts off with this 'First Principle,' as the source from which all things emanate, regardless of the exact mode ascribed to this emanation. Once this emanation is posited as an initial assumption a series of metaphysical problems are forthwith raised with which such an ontology is bound to reckon. 'What,' one might ask, 'does this emanation entail as regards the creature?' The creature emanates admittedly from the One, by reason of its infinite plenitude and generosity. 'But what does this creature derive from the One out of which it issued forth, and what is the exact scope of this generosity as regards the creature?' This question implies clearly a reference to the status of the creature considered in itself subsequently to the act of its constitution in being. In settling it monism might give one of two answers, depending in fact on its conception of the mode of emanation of the creature from the One and in the last analysis on its conception of the exact nature of the One itself. The first of these answers, as in Plotinus and Dionysius, can be stated in the following terms: Owing to its boundless generosity, the One overflows with a *measure* of *all* its perfections which it confers upon the creature. Its goodness is bestowed integrally upon the creature, as regards its substance if not its degree. The second answer, as in al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arites, concedes the reality

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of this emanation of the divine goodness, without conceding its integral character. In its emphatic stress on the transcendence of the One it declares that the 'integral quality' of His perfection cannot be shared by the creature at all. Thus, it creates a chasm between the Creator and the creature which no dialectic can bridge.

We have already seen in what way this position detracts from the divine perfection, while it professes to exalt the divine transcendence and sovereignty. But the speciousness of this position consists in that it rests upon two further metaphysical fallacies: a false conception of divine transcendence and a false conception of the nature of Being. The wages of the former fallacy is the impossibility of ascent from the creature to the Creator, the wages of the latter is the unjustifiability of predicated causality of the Creator and the creature.

Dionysius describes the Good as self-diffusive generosity, as overflowing abundance. In this Good is found the ground of the emanation of things from God. Yet the emanation of things from God is not only a communication of the divine goodness; it is likewise a revelation of the divine essence, 'an utterance of the Divine Silence,' in the words of Dionysius.<sup>73</sup> The Godhead, in the super-essential unity of His ineffable Being, is nameless, unknowable and unattainable. Were He to remain concealed behind the veils of His undifferentiated identity, He would remain totally inscrutable and ineffable. But owing to His boundless goodness and generosity the Divine Being issues forth out of the solitude of His undifferentiated Godhead, first, into the differentiated trinity of Divine Persons and, second, into the multiplicity of created things.<sup>74</sup>

Here again we witness the significance of the Dionysian concept of Being, both as overflowing abundance and as radiant luminosity. And this is the character of all Being, finite or Infinite, relative or absolute. Finite, relative Being, it is true, is self-revelatory of essence and self-diffusive of substance, in a derivative and limited sense; inasmuch as it *derives* this two-fold character from the First Being, with and through the Act in which

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it derives its very Being. But even when the derivative character of this twofold quality of finite Being is conceded, it remains that it is by reason of its Being that a thing is capable of communicating its perfection to other things, however fragmentary and partial this perfection is. Thus even for Dionysius and neo-Platonism in general, self-communicative goodness is a predicate of being as such. It is evident that, in one sense, the ultimate ground of this self-communicative goodness is the participation of all things in the Goodness of the One, so that it is truly the One itself which is revealed and communicated in every created thing. The pantheistic predicament, however, is not—as would seem from this admission—totally inescapable. Outside the One in whose fullness all things participate there is admittedly nothing. Things come to be through participation in its inexhaustible Being, without appropriating it, like the radii of the circle which share the same centre without appropriating it or becoming identical with it.<sup>75</sup> Contrary to the assumptions of pantheism, however, the One *can* be diversified in the many while remaining distinct from them in essence; its perfection *can* be shared by the many through a process of participation rather than through a process of disintegration, as it were. The One proliferates its Being without being broken up or pulverized in the multiplicity of things it brings forth. And this is precisely the nature of the relationship ‘creation’ in which the One generates all things.

Now in determining the character of finite being, neo-Platonism—setting out from the First Principle of things as it must, proceeds to ascribe to finite being the same positive characteristics underlying its conception of this First Principle, while reserving at the same time to this First Principle the character of transcendence proper to it. We shall describe this as the ‘process of descent’ in the determination of the character of finite from infinite Being. But for Thomism and Aristotelianism, this procedure is unjustifiable, since the characteristics of infinite Being, considering the nature of our understanding, can be determined only through a ‘process of ascent’ from the finite to the infinite. We arrive at demonstrating the existence of God and

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at determining His sovereign attributes, Aquinas teaches, from the signs of visible things.<sup>76</sup> The existence of God cannot be demonstrated *a priori*, because we can have no *a priori* conception of the divine Essence, which would serve as ‘middle term’ in this demonstration, owing to the infinite disproportionateness of this Essence to our created intellect.<sup>77</sup> Nor can any ‘intelligible species,’ which our intellect abstracts from the conditions of sensibility, correspond to the infinity of the Divine Essence. If the *a priori* procedure were the only procedure then the demonstration of God’s existence would be a vain endeavour. But in addition to this procedure, there is the procedure *from ‘effect’ to ‘cause,’* or the method generally known as the *a posteriori* method of demonstration.<sup>78</sup> If the effect is completely adequate to the cause—and reveals as it were all its power and perfection, then this method can yield incalculable gain with respect to the nature of the cause of which it is the effect. If, on the other hand, this effect falls short of the cause in being or eminence, then we can scarcely expect to derive from it an adequate notion of the character of the cause. God, as cause, stands to created effects, as the infinite to the finite. Therefore, no effect can be adequate to the revelation of His essence. The *a posteriori* method proves at best, with respect to God, that He is (*an sit*) never what He is (*quid est*). Demonstratively, the latter question admits of a solution only in negative terms.<sup>79</sup>

Yet the legitimacy of the *a posteriori* method cannot be admitted without qualification. The validity of the causal argument presupposes the validity of the causal principle, as a principle of Being *qua* Being. Otherwise the transition from the finite to the infinite would be altogether unwarranted. In the Aristotelian scheme, as we have already seen, causality is said to be a concomitant of actuality in real entities; in the Dionysian scheme, instead, it is said to be a concomitant of goodness. We have expounded at sufficient length the implications of the Dionysian position. We must now turn to causality in its relationship to the Act in the metaphysics of the Stagirite and Aquinas. The analysis of Being, as given in the order of concrete existence, reveals that the principle through which things

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'are what they are' is the Form or Act.<sup>80</sup> It follows that the Being of an entity is commensurate with its actuality. For avowedly things are not, even in the point of being, of the same rank as it were, and that precisely on account of the diversity of their participation in the fullness of the Act. The ultimate reason for this diversity, as we shall see later, is the incommensurability of any 'even' or uniform order of created being with the divine goodness which accordingly must be manifested in the diverse multiplicity of things. But whatever the metaphysical justification of this diversity and of the hierarchization of things consequent upon it, a law of 'ontological gradation' can be discovered in the order of Being, running concurrently with the order of gradation pertaining to Act. And in this parallel gradation of Being and Act we have a decisive clue to the existence of God as the Pure Act, in whom there is no composition,<sup>81</sup> or the First Being, from whom all created things derive their being. The principle, invoked in the two *Summas* in the justification of this procedure, is the abstract maxim that whatever is pre-eminent in a genus is the cause of all the members participating in that genus: '*Quod autem divitum maxime tale in aliquo genere, est causa omnium quae sunt illius generis, sicut ignis, qui est causa omnium calidorum.*'<sup>82</sup> Thus as the grades of nobility, goodness and truth are referable to a pre-eminent term in their genus, so are the grades of being referable to the First Being in whom the perfections of all things have their roots.<sup>83</sup>

But the Act, as we have seen, does not represent merely the principle through which things are what they are, it represents equally the principle whereby things act, the principle of their dynamism and efficacy, by reason of the fullness of being which the Act confers upon them, as it were. If it is a fundamental dictum of Aristotelianism and Thomism, as we have seen, that things are inasmuch as they are in act, it is no less a fundamental dictum that things act inasmuch as they are in act. Things 'are' and 'act,' therefore, by virtue of the same Act which confers upon them the title of being and activity. The indissoluble unity of Being and operation, in Aquinas, is such that he calls the former the 'first

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act,' the latter the 'second act' in a real entity.<sup>84</sup> But clearly the distinction between the first and second act, 'the integrity' and operation of the object—is of a rational order. It does not and ought not affect the unity of the indivisible act in which the object is constituted in being. The unity of being is a metaphysical postulate which is indispensable for any adequate conception of being. A thing clings jealously to its unity and integrity as it clings to its being.<sup>85</sup>

Here we come upon the old Eleatic dilemma. The identity of being is somehow inescapable, but this identity should not be conceived in such a way as to infringe the no less inescapable notion of the diversity of being. In order to avoid the Eleatic impasse we must have recourse, in the first place, to the Platonic doctrine of participation upon which we have touched. This doctrine finds the genetic ground of finite being in the infinite. Clearly then the finite and infinite, although they somehow participate in the same category of being, are distinct and irreducible into each other. The exact ontological status with which the finite is invested in Platonism need not detain us here. For however minimal the shadowy existence ascribed by Plato to the particular things of sense, these things participate in a *positive* way in the perfection of the infinite. The import of this initial distinction between the finite and the infinite to our argument is decisive. In the very admission of the distinction between the finite and the infinite, Platonism posits both a law of dependence, as between the finite and the infinite, and a law of hierarchy, as between the members participating in the perfection of the infinite. The finite and the infinite are clearly not equal in the degree of being or perfection, nor for that matter the finite participants in the perfection of the infinite. Participation implies diversity in the grades of participated perfection, without which the very distinction between the finite and the infinite would not arise at all.

Now it is, of course, a serious problem how being can be taken as a 'common term' in the determination of the relationship of hierarchy in which the diverse members of the ontological series

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stand to each other and, in the last analysis, the relationship in which the finite stands to the infinite. It is no less a serious problem how the concept being can as much as be predicated of two terms between which there is no proportion: as the finite and the infinite. Yet these two problems are found to resolve themselves, upon close scrutiny, into one major metaphysical problem: namely, 'How can being be shared by the many and at the same time remain whole and entire,' or in simpler terms: 'How can we speak of being as one and many without violating the law of contradiction?'

To resolve this problem we have only to recall the Dionysian doctrine of the self-diffusiveness of the Being identical with the Good. The Good communicates its perfection to created things, without thereby being exhausted or spent away and without thereby alienating itself, as it were, and losing its identity and transcendence. It is in its insistence on the irreducible transcendence of the One that the monism of the Pseudo-Dionysius is able to circumambulate the impasse of monistic Pantheism without falling into it. For the Good is not diversified through morcellation, but rather through duplication: it is not the 'substance' of the First Being which is shared by created things but rather Its 'likeness.' Thus the First Being brings forth the manifold diversity of things without being commingled with Its workmanship. Owing to the inadequacy of any created being to represent the inexhaustible fullness of the Divine Being, things are multiplied in accordance with a gradational scale of perfection, and this is the ultimate principle of the distinction and multiplicity of things.<sup>86</sup> The one becomes many—to restate the matter in terms of the time-hallowed dilemma of the Eleatics, by reason of its self-diffusive character. But in this self-diffusion, being is not manifested, as it were, in one dimension, owing to its infinite perfection and its incommensurability with any of its finite manifestations. And in this same incommensurability, as we shall see in the last section of this chapter, is grounded the rational possibility of the extraordinary and miraculous intervention of God in history.

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This account of the unity-in-diversity of being can be invoked now in the justification of the predicability of the concept being of both the finite and the infinite. It is, of course, baffling that the notion being should be taken as a ‘common term,’ as between two entities incommensurably disproportionate with one another. The neo-Platonic conception of the One as a super-Ontal reality seems, therefor, to be fully legitimate on this very score. Yet neo-Platonism itself, notwithstanding the transcendence it ascribes to the One, employs the concept being as a ‘common term,’ in speaking of its relationship to things. For does it not speak of the One as a super-*Being*, or the Fount of Being which itself transcends Being? Now however much neo-Platonism might urge that this inadequate approach to the matter is dictated by the nature of our understanding which can lay hold of ontological concepts only, and however much it might insist on the rational inaccessibility of the infinite, it is nevertheless compelled to admit that the infinite *exists*, albeit in a transcendent manner. What neo-Platonism is struggling against is a univocal conception of being, as a homogeneous quality of the finite and the infinite, and here neo-Platonism is perfectly justifiable in its procedure. If existence means a determinate mode of existence—as it must whenever it is predicated of any finite being—then the infinite cannot even be said to exist.<sup>87</sup> Neo-Platonism, however, cannot uphold successfully the thesis that the One can generate Being without itself being related somehow to Being; or that, in a strict sense, it does *not* exist. What neo-Platonism is endeavouring to save is the supereminent transcendence of the One and in this endeavour its motives are perfectly legitimate.<sup>88</sup>

In the Thomist epistemology, the doctrine of analogy is designed to meet this very difficulty. What justifies the predicability of a concept (e.g. being) of the finite and the infinite is the circumstance that we can distinguish, as regards this concept, between the *contents* of the concept (*res significata*) and the *mode* of its predication (*modus significandi*).<sup>89</sup> When we predicate the concept being of the finite and the infinite, of the creature and the Creator, we would be fully justified, so long as we reserve

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to the Creator the ‘mode of eminence’ which is proper to Him by virtue of His infinity. And this predication would be meaningful inasmuch as it denotes a positive perfection. But it is not meaningful in an absolute sense, since its modality is absolutely incomprehensible.<sup>90</sup> When we speak of a finite being as good, our intellect grasps the judgment in question because it can assign the exact manner in which the determinate goodness of that finite being consists.

But not such is the character of the goodness inhering in God, nor for that matter of all the positive attributes we predicate of God analogically. For whereas in the creature these attributes refer to certain determinate qualities supervening upon the subject or ‘suppositum’ and distinct from its essence, in God these attributes represent the self-subsistent unity of the divine essence, which cannot be conceived through the likeness of any ‘species’ to which the created intellect can attain.<sup>91</sup>

Here it should be noted that the validity of the analogical procedure rests, in the last analysis on the cardinal metaphysical principle which we have expounded. Affirmative concepts are not predicated of God in such a way as to exclude a negative defect rather than to affirm a positive perfection, as Maimonides taught (*Guide*, I, 58); nor simply to denote a relationship of causality between Him and the creature, as others like Alain of Lille (*Theol. Reg.*, 21, 26) held. Rather do these affirmative concepts denote the positive perfections pre-existing in God and in which creatures participate.<sup>92</sup> It follows, therefore, that in a strict ontological and logical sense they apply primarily to God rather than to the creature.<sup>93</sup> We do not predicate goodness of things and then proceed to predicate it of God. Rather do we predicate goodness of things, because we discover in them a share of the self-subsisting goodness of God in which they participate in their capacity as the creatures of God. And this presupposes that goodness, like all the positive perfections which we discover fragmentarily in the creatures, pre-exist in an undivided unity in the First Being, who of the superabundance of His love and generosity has freely chosen to communicate these perfections to the creatures that

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they might thereby share in the fullness of His infinite goodness.<sup>94</sup>

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the affiliation of the doctrine of analogy to the Dionysian doctrine of the self-diffusive character of being. The analogical ascent from the finite to the infinite rests upon a tacit perception of a positive 'ontological kinship' between the finite and the infinite. From the standpoint of the finite this ontological kinship can never be ascertained conclusively: since at best it could be set up as a contingent, empirical postulate; and in this manner its application to the infinite would be absolutely unwarranted. If it is to be raised to the dignity of a metaphysical principle, its roots must be sought beyond the finite. And if we are ever to bridge the gap between the finite and the infinite we must state the exact metaphysical relationship in which these two terms stand to each other. This the Dionysian doctrine of the self-diffusive character of the Good, conjoined to the Platonic doctrine of participation to which it is closely affiliated, proposes to settle. Upon this as its metaphysical groundwork, analogy can legitimately erect its epistemological structure and show in what way the riches of the divine perfection lavished upon the creatures can be gleaned, as it were, in the reconstruction of our picture of the divine Being. Paradoxical as it might sound, the analogical ascent to the infinite is possible only because of a primordial movement of descent of the infinite into the finite. The *a posteriori*, epistemological procedure of analogy is rooted in the *a priori*, metaphysical pre-suppositions of Platonism and neo-Platonism.

The analogical method, when applied to the concept being, is found thus to settle at one stroke the two acute problems: the problem of the unity-in-diversity of being bequeathed in its insoluble formula upon philosophy by Parmenides and the problem of a positive clue to the determination of the transcendent attributes of God. In the former case, being is conceived as unity unfolding itself in diverse ways and unequal degrees.<sup>95</sup> That being should so unfold itself without losing the specific character of unity or identity pertaining to it, notwithstanding its diffusion

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in the many, is a problem which we have settled in the perspective of neo-Platonism by invoking the two principles of the self-diffusiveness of Being and the incommensurability of its infinite perfection with its finite representations. Yet when this metaphysical problem has been settled, a logical epistemological problem remains to reckon with. ‘Granted that the many flow from the one, as their source and fountainhead, what, indeed, is the exact relationship between these two terms to which the analogical concept of being refers? And considering the nature of our understanding and its avowed grounding in experience, how does the perception of the One, as the First Principle of things, come about in the first place?’

In the a prioristic ontology of Plato and the neo-Platonists the determination of the existence and the reality of the infinite calls for no account, since it is from this existence and reality that ontology must set out. Rather does the existence of the finite call for such an account, inasmuch as it lacks the character of finality and absoluteness proper to the infinite. Of course chronologically and psychologically the infinite and its existence are posterior to the finite, since they dawn upon consciousness, as it were, at an ulterior stage in man’s perception of reality. This is the significance of the Platonic doctrine of reminiscence, which concedes a purely relative reality to the finite and employs it merely as a means to the discernment of the infinite, a transitional stage in the journey leading thereto. In an ontology, whose epistemological presuppositions are a posterioristic or empirical, like that of Aristotle and Aquinas, the philosopher must set out from the given reality of the finite in his determination of the existence and the status of the infinite. In this procedure a whole elaborate methodology must be erected, no doubt. The infinite must possess the same predicates as the finite, since no other predicates are accessible to our understanding, but must possess them in a transcendent manner, if the character of infinitude proper to it is to be safeguarded. What warrants the contention that even at the point of their superlative perfection these predicates preserve their specific or qualitative identity is the faith in the

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uniformity and consistency of the ontological order, as it were. This faith can never be rationalized from the standpoint of a purely empirical epistemology. To achieve this rationalization, philosophy must necessarily turn to the Platonic doctrine of participation and transcend, as it were, the plane of empirical presuppositions. Aristotelianism is capable of achieving this rationalization with which the possibility of metaphysics as a science is bound up, because it is not committed to pure empiricism.

It would seem that even for Platonism and neo-Platonism the affirmation of a law of 'ontological consistency or uniformity' governing the finite and the infinite remains an act of faith, which cannot be fully rationalized. Aristotelianism has at least the great merit of determining the existence and the reality of the infinite, from the standpoint of the given reality of that which is with which it starts and upon which it erects its metaphysical edifice. Thus it posits the infinite as the 'necessary condition' of the finite, whether the finite is envisaged as an entity in a process of motion or a term in the series of causation, without which even the reality of the finite would be totally inexplicable. But Aristotelianism achieves this result by virtue of its conviction that its metaphysical procedure is valid, a conviction which rests upon a tacit admission that the laws of being which it invokes in its demonstration are valid throughout, and this, finally, presupposes an irreducible faith in the 'consistency' of the ontological order.

It ought to be candidly confessed, therefore, if the predicament of circular reasoning is to be avoided, that the Aristotelian-Thomist doctrine of analogy rests indisputably on a Platonic-neo-Platonic metaphysical groundwork. And this is not surprising, neither in the case of Aristotle nor in the case of Aquinas. Aristotle, despite his polemic with Plato, remains faithful to him on more than one question, and Aquinas achieves, as we have seen in the instance of his doctrine of Being-*qua*-Act and Being-*qua*-Good, a synthesis between the positive elements of Platonic idealism and Aristotelian realism. Whatever its metaphysical groundwork, analogy affirms the inclusion of the finite and the infinite in one category, and this it must do if it is

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ever to lay hold of the elusive reality of the infinite. And in this its procedure is not unjustifiable. For the denotation finite-infinite presupposes an element of unity underlying the differentiation of the two terms. This denotation is clearly a dimensional one; or, rather, a denotation which has regard to the respective magnitudes of the finite and the infinite. Without an element of community between the finite and infinite, the very distinction between them becomes unthinkable. Between two entities absolutely different or distinct, no common term can be found, and therefore their very distinction cannot be affirmed. So that in the admission of a dimensional differentiation between the finite and the infinite there is latent a tacit perception of an element of community between them. This community, reduced to its bare ontological minimum, is found to be one of bare existence—one must say of indeterminate existence, if the just presuppositions of negative theology which we have examined above are to be met. This indeterminate existence is the emptiest rational category which can be predicated of the infinite; it is so empty that nothing positive is said in it about the infinite—since this is impossible. One can understand here the motives of speculative mysticism and Hegelianism in speaking of the Absolute as the '*coincidentia contradictorum*' and ultimately as the entity in which Being coincides with not-Being.<sup>96</sup>

Now in the perception of an element of community between the finite and the infinite we have demonstrated their participation in a common category, the category of being, without, however, impairing in any way their irreducible distinction. This distinction, which we have described as dimensional, entails a relationship of dependence between the two terms. Need we repeat here that the assertion of this relationship of dependence is the positive contribution to ontology of Plato and the neo-Platonists. The associated doctrines of participation and emanation state that the finite depends upon the infinite for its very being, derives its being from the infinite, is rooted in it as its ultimate ground and principle. And in this mode of dependence we have the most decisive clue to the relationship between the

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finite and the infinite without which a whole series of metaphysical problems would be left without any possibility of settlement.

It might be wondered of what relevance to our major problem is this incursion into pure ontology. This surprise is not unnatural. Yet the validity of the analogical method which we have been examining can be defended only once the metaphysical presuppositions upon which it rests are fully expounded. And this is what we have been attempting, in the light of Platonism and neo-Platonism. With this remark we can resume our main discussion.

We have seen how the notion of the Act represents the principle of being as well as the principle of activity, in Aristotle and Aquinas. If things are and act, in and through the same ontological sign imprinted in their depths, as it were, then things stand to each other in the point of being as in the point of action, in exactly the same relationship. In the former type of relationship we have discovered a clue to the existence of an *En Realissimum*, as the Fourth Way has shown. And this clue was successfully pursued up to its terminal point in the infinite, by virtue of our analogical conception of the matter. This relationship had to be specified in such a way as to reserve to the two terms (the finite and the infinite) their diversity without thereby abolishing their community; that is, their participation in an 'identical concept.' In thus specifying the relationship between the finite and the infinite in their participation in the category of being, we discovered the clue to the solution of the Parmenidean dilemma of the one and the many. What gain can be expected now from applying the analogical method to the second type of relationship between the finite and the infinite?

The general character of the relationship between the finite and the infinite has been described as one of dependence. For the finite was said to depend upon the infinite as its ground or principle; or rather to flow from it as from its source. Our analysis of the nature of this dependence revealed that, by virtue of its self-diffusive benevolence, the infinite communicates to the finite, first, its being, and second, its dynamic energy. And it is the latter

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'gift' of the infinite that is called the causality of the finite.<sup>97</sup> The infinite is at the same time Goodness, Being and Act. In inviting the finite to share in its perfection, the infinite invites it at the same time to participate in its goodness, being and activity, through the same movement of overflowing generosity. And in this is found the ultimate justification of the causal dynamism of things. The problem of the justifiability of predicated causality of the finite and the infinite is, thus, identical with the problem of the justifiability of predicated being of both these terms. Like the latter, this problem can be solved successfully in analogical terms.

The a posterioristic approach to the first type of relationship between the finite and the infinite (i.e. the relationship of being)—notwithstanding its grounding in the *a priori* doctrine of participation—yielded the clue to the demonstration of the existence of God, as *Ens Realissimum*. We should expect that the second type of relationship—when considered from the standpoint of its inferior or dependent term, viz.—the finite—should yield a clue to the demonstration of the existence of God, as First Cause. And this is, in point of fact, what it actually does. Now the centrality of the second type of relationship to Thomism can scarcely be exaggerated. The Fourth Way which argues from grades of being is of Platonic origin and assumes, in Thomism, a minor importance. The predilection of Aquinas for the argument from cause is unmistakable.<sup>98</sup> We have no intention of recapitulating here the argument from cause (Second Way) as given in the two *summas*. We can do no better than send to these works or to the discussion of Garrigou-Lagrange, in *God, His Existence and Nature*.<sup>99</sup> What interests us here is the fact that the Aristotelian-Thomist argument from cause depends for its validity upon the validity of the causal principle, as a law of being *qua* being; since otherwise the transition from the creature to the Creator would be unjustifiable. In defending this validity against the attacks of scepticism we had to show how causality, like being, is predicable of the finite and the infinite by reason of the 'law of kinship' which binds them

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together, in their relation to one another as generated to generator. And in this endeavour the Dionysian doctrine of the self-diffusive character of the Good and the allied Platonic doctrine of participation proved more than remunerating.

The ground on which al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arites, as we have seen at length in the first and second chapters, repudiate the causal principle is their preoccupation with reserving the prerogative of activity to God alone. An agent, in the genuine sense, they argue, must be omnipotent and omniscient, that is, must produce the totality of its effect and know the consequences of its activity to their minutest detail. No created agent, however, answers to these two conditions, because of the insufficiency of its power and the limitation of the scope of its knowledge. *Ergo*, God is the Sole Agent, inasmuch as He alone is omnipotent and omniscient. In the refutation of this occasionalist position two genuine difficulties can be noted. *First*: How indeed can the concept of activity be predicated of the Creator and the creature, when the Creator so far transcends the creature that no proportion between them can be found? And *second*: How can the absolute power of the Almighty leave scope for the operation of secondary agents in the production of natural effects?

We have already resolved the latter difficulty, in the perspective of Thomism. The possibility of a concurrent providence of the Creator and the creature is not grounded in the insufficiency of the divine power, as occasionalism alleges; but rather in the abundance of the divine love and the divine wisdom. God permits the autonomous causality of the creature that thereby the creature might communicate to other things the perfection it has received from Him and in this manner share in the perfection of the Almighty who is cause in the most pre-eminent sense. In this way, His love and His generosity are manifested unto all things and through all things. And He likewise entrusts secondary agents with the execution of His providential designs that thereby the beauty of order enjoined by His wisdom might be revealed, in and through the ordered hierarchy of inferior and superior agents.<sup>100</sup>

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There remains the difficulty of the disproportionateness between the First Cause and the series of secondary causes. This disproportionateness, it would seem, makes the inclusion of the finite and the infinite, of God and the creature, in the same category of causality, totally unjustifiable. Like the difficulty which we have encountered in examining the predicability of being to the finite and the infinite, this difficulty can be resolved through the application to the concept cause of the analogical method which we employed in settling the problem of the transcendence of the infinite. When we speak of the Creator as cause, and the creature as cause, we mean the *same thing*; namely, an entity which bestows being, in one or other of its aspects, upon another entity. But we do not therewith mean the same thing, to the same degree, or in the same *proportion*. For the causality of the Creator reaches to the depths of things and summons them out of the darkness of not-being, by conferring upon them the character of being, *per se*. And this is the exclusive prerogative of the Almighty who, out of the inexhaustible plenitude of His infinite perfection, bestows being upon all things that are.<sup>101</sup> Yet, 'how is the inclusion of the power to bestow accidental being and being *per se* under the same concept justifiable' is seen, upon close scrutiny, to resolve itself into the question: 'How can we speak of being *per accidens* and being *per se* in the same terms; and include relative and absolute being in the same concept of being?' This question, however, offers no difficulty except for an ontology which fails to perceive the analogical character of being. For were being a generic concept, then avowedly this inclusion would be altogether unjustifiable. In the order of reality as we know it a genus manifests itself in determinate forms, through the supervention upon it of specific differentiae. If a member of that genus, possessing in a unity of self-subsistence all the differentiae pertaining to that genus to a superlative degree, were hypothetically assumed to exist, then it would be impossible to differentiate it, and as such it cannot even be said to belong to the genus in question. Nor do we know, in the order of reality, of an entity which possesses all the positive perfections existing in all other

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genera. Now the First Being is not only said to possess all the positive perfections pertaining to all things to a superlative degree, but also to be their very source and origin. Such an entity, if it were ever shown to exist, would be such as to be incapable of inclusion in any genus whatever.<sup>102</sup>

God is First Cause, therefore, in an absolute sense, because He alone can bestow the character of being, *per se*. Inasmuch as created things can bestow upon other created things the character of accidental being, by imparting to them their participated perfections, to that extent they can be said to be causes, albeit in a different proportion.

### v

#### MIRACLE AND THE INCOMMENSURABILITY OF THE CREATED ORDER WITH THE INFINITE GOODNESS OF GOD

We are now in a position to settle the Averroist-Ghazālīan controversy over the question of rationalizing miracle. The radical motive of Averroës in dismissing miracle as philosophically irrelevant, as we have seen, was his endeavour to save the rational unity and integrity of the cosmic order. The admission of miracle, Averroës alleges, threatens to impair this unity and this integrity by allowing the extraordinary and the supernatural to make their incursion into the natural order. Al-Ghazālī, on the other hand, in his endeavour to rationalize miracle, erects a metaphysical edifice in which, as we have seen, the miraculous can have no genuine role to play. All cosmic events, he argues, come about through the direct and immediate intervention of God. But if by the miraculous is meant the extraordinary and heterogeneous intervention of the Deity in the cosmic sphere, as we have seen, then the manner in which every cosmic event comes about is miraculous in precisely this sense. Instead of explaining the extraordinary and unique character of miracle, as an instance of

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the heterogeneous intervention of God in history with a view to executing His providential designs, al-Ghazālī succeeds thus in explaining miracle away by loading every historic event with the positive contents of the miraculous and the extraordinary.

In order to settle the problem of miracle successfully, philosophy must begin with stating the exact problem it is confronted with, whenever it is faced with the historic reality of miracle as an irreducible fact. Metaphysically speaking, the problem of miracle raises two cognate problems with which we must deal now. There is in the first place the problem which the miraculous raises with regard to the 'uniformity of God's ways,' as dictated by the counsels of His wisdom. If this uniformity of God's ways is to be successfully interpreted in philosophic terms, then a certain mode of necessity must be ascribed to the cosmic order in its internal structure. A deistic world-view, similar to that of Averroës, would naturally promise to achieve this interpretation with positive success; but this it does, like naturalistic determinism and fatalism, at the cost of the genuine reality of God's omnipotence and His sovereign role in the universe, owing to its conception of the absolute autonomy of cosmic life.

Now if the omnipotence of God is conceded in the interest of a genuine conception of the divine perfection, as we have seen, and if the rationality of His ways, as manifested in the uniformity of natural operations is conceded too, then: 'How,' one might ask 'can God do something outside the order of His eternally ordained providence, without infringing the rational unity of cosmic life and without violating the irrevocable decrees of His wisdom?'<sup>103</sup>

To resolve the former problem, we must begin by determining the exact mode of necessity which can be ascribed to the natural order. A metaphysics of pure contingency, like that of the Ash'arites and al-Ghazālī, was rejected on two grounds: *first*, its misconception of the nature of being in its relation to activity; and *second*, its detraction from the perfection of God and of His sovereign wisdom. Yet the fate of a metaphysics of absolute determinism,

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like that of Averroës, did not prove any happier. In order to complete our enquiry it is imperative to proceed to a *positive* determination of the precise 'modality' which can be ascribed to the natural order, unless our analysis is to remain on the plane of negative contentions.

In grappling with this problem in the *Summa contra Gentiles*, Aquinas seeks the roots of this 'modality' in a sphere which falls half-way between the spheres of pure contingency and absolute determinism, but remains distinct from both of them. In conformity with his customary procedure, he begins by subjecting to severe scrutiny these two antithetic positions.<sup>104</sup> Determinism finds the roots of the absolute necessity it assigns to the cosmic order in the indisputable reality of God's necessary will of His essence. Yet determinism misconceives the nature of this necessary divine self-volition in its relation to the created order. When this nature has been specified the problem of the mode of necessity which can be legitimately ascribed to the created order and the problem of the possibility of God's miraculous intervention in the course of His eternally ordained providence could be adequately settled.

The divine will has the divine essence for its object and this it wills of absolute necessity.<sup>105</sup> Yet the striking aspect of the matter is that, inasmuch as that essence comprises all things in itself as their Principle or Cause, God wills other things in and through the same self-centred movement of self-volition.<sup>106</sup> But this aspect of His self-volition entails no necessity in God, because creation adds nothing to the fullness of the divine essence, but stands rather to the divine will in a position of utter indeterminateness. 'Why should God have brought things into being?' admits of one answer only, namely: by reason of His gratuitous love and generosity, God invites the creation to share in His likeness that the boundlessness of His Goodness might be communicated unto all things. And thus the divine goodness is shared by all things through multiplication in the multiplicity of existing things.<sup>107</sup>

In an emanationist metaphysics of the crude type, the twofold

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movement of divine self-volition and of the volition of other things is represented as one of 'natural necessity' or 'natural consequence.' Things are alleged to emanate from God as the rays emanate from the sun, and water emanates from a stream. Yet clearly this emanationist view endangers the reality of divine volition and divine consciousness. If things were to emanate from God, by a 'necessity of nature,' then He would be unconscious of this process of emanation transpiring within Him. If by a 'necessity of knowledge' then He would be conscious of it, yet would be powerless to bring it about or arrest its course as His free will decrees. And in both these assumptions there inheres a positive detraction from the divine perfection. To guard against this danger, we must affirm categorically that God acts freely, because He acts intelligently; and that, in creation as in all forms of Divine activity, there inheres a movement of free volition rooted in divine wisdom.<sup>108</sup>

It might be urged at this point that the necessity of creation might inhere in the necessity of the divine justice if not in the necessity of the divine nature. Yet this view is found, upon close examination, to hold no greater promise of success. Prior to the existence of the universe which was brought forth into being through the spontaneous decree of the divine will, a 'debt of justice' incumbent upon God is wholly unthinkable.<sup>109</sup> In the point of its being, of its incipiency, the creation stands to the divine will in a position of utter indeterminateness. Outside the divine goodness, nothing can be enjoined in the justification of God's decree to bring the universe into being. With respect to that goodness that which conduces to its fulfilment might be said to be 'due' to it and, therefore, to be enjoined by justice.<sup>110</sup> But this clearly entails a mode of necessity intrinsic to the movement of divine self-volition rather than an extraneous necessity of compulsion, to which the Almighty must necessarily succumb.<sup>111</sup> The ultimate ground of this necessity is the counsel of divine wisdom and the immutability of God's decrees.<sup>112</sup> Inasmuch as the divine power is not wanting in efficacy, a 'necessity of ordinance' might be found to ensue upon the free decree of the

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Almighty to bring the universe into being.<sup>113</sup> But this, in fact, is a ‘conditional necessity,’ or as Aquinas puts it elsewhere, a ‘necessity of supposition.’<sup>114</sup> If we start from the actual fact of creation—the fact, namely, that God *has* actually brought the creation into being; and if we recall the immutability of the divine will and the irrevocability of His sovereign decrees, then the creation is found to be necessary, through the necessity of God’s eternal decree to bring it into being.<sup>115</sup> But here we are arguing backward *from* the fact of creation. If we abstract the actual fact of creation and the condition of time implied in this fact and consider the creation in its relation to the divine will absolutely, then not even this ‘necessity of supposition’ can be admitted. And hence, in an absolute sense, the creation stands to the divine will in a position of utter contingency or what amounts to the same thing, creation depends on the sheer decree of the Almighty, whose sole principle of determinacy is the divine wisdom.

When we turn to the creation in itself, and subsequently to the act in which it was brought forth, we can discover in it a ‘necessity of causal order.’ Prior to God’s decree to bring the creation about, of course, no causal order could be spoken of except in relation to God as First Cause,<sup>116</sup> and in this respect only a ‘necessity of supposition’ was conceded. With respect to the ‘causal order’ proper to things themselves, however, we discover a threefold mode of absolute necessity.<sup>117</sup>

*First*, in relation to the essential principles which enter into a thing as constituents thereof. Thus owing to their composition of Matter and Form, composite bodies are corruptible of necessity. But in incomposite substances (e.g. Separate Substances) this corruptibility is not necessary.

*Second*, in relation to the parts of these principles constituting the composite. Thus there is a necessity in relation to Matter and a necessity in relation to Form in such composites. For instance, with respect to the former, man who has a ‘mixed body’ must of necessity have the humours, elements and organs proper to this body. With respect to the latter, he must of necessity be a rational animal, since this is precisely the Form of man.

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*Third*, in relation to the properties which belong to Matter or Form in the composite. Thus it is necessary that a saw be hard since it is made of iron.

It is to be noticed that this type of 'causal necessity' relates to the material and formal causes taken in conjunction, as in the first case, or taken each separately, as in the second and third cases. Causality is thus taken as the clue to the determination of the exact mode of necessity which can be legitimately ascribed to things. As would be naturally expected, in addition to the necessity consequent upon the material and formal causes, two other types of necessity corresponding to the efficient and final causes could be discovered also. With respect to the former, Aquinas distinguishes a necessity of 'action' and a necessity of 'passion.' The first of these types of necessity is accidental, since the relation of the effect to the agent is like the relation of accidents to the essential principles from which they flow.<sup>118</sup> For the effect to follow necessarily upon the action of the agent, two conditions must be fulfilled: potentiality to receive in the patient and 'conquest' of the patient by the agent. If these two conditions are fulfilled absolutely and always, there will be absolute necessity in the efficient cause: as in those things which act necessarily and always. If, on the other hand, owing to defective power or the hindrance of an extraneous factor, these two conditions are not fulfilled, then this necessity would not be absolute.<sup>119</sup>

With regard to the final cause, a mode of 'finalistic determinism' can be found both in voluntary and in natural agents. In the latter case this determinism is consequent upon the Form proper to the agent; in the former upon the perception of the end proposed to the will 'under the aspect of the good.' The finalistic necessity which determines the activity of the voluntary agent has scope only with regard to the end. Therefore it leaves the will undetermined as regards the means, inasmuch as the fulfilment of an end proposed to the will as necessary can be achieved in a variety of conceivable ways.<sup>120</sup>

The ontological order, born of divine wisdom, no less than divine power, is thus seen to be an order which is determined

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inwardly by the necessary causal laws pertaining to being. In creating this order, the divine wisdom has enjoined that it should be endowed with the perfection of being, and likewise with the perfection of order and 'lawfulness,' which pertains to genuine being. It is true in this injunction the divine power has been freely superseded; made to recede before the divine wisdom, as it were: but only that it might yield thereby to the ordinance of the divine love. And in this respect this supercession can be described as a positive manifestation of the divine wisdom and love, rather than of the incapacity of the Almighty. This divine wisdom enjoins equally that things be endowed with the character of contingency—which is as proper to genuine being as necessity. Thus God has permitted the operation of secondary contingent causes that the immensity of His love and generosity might be manifested in the most glaring way;<sup>121</sup> so that the creature, whether necessary or contingent, reveals the fullness of the divine generosity and love.

In assigning the ultimate reason for creation, we found in God's will of His goodness the ground of the manifestation of the divine will.<sup>122</sup> This will, we said, is determined necessarily by the divine goodness as its object; but inasmuch as this goodness stands in no need of anything extrinsic to it, owing to its self-sufficiency, whatever exists outside it is found to stand to it in a position of sheer superfluity. God, therefore, does not will the creation of necessity, because it adds nothing to His perfection.<sup>123</sup>

Now if the ultimate reason of creation is the infinite goodness of God, then any conceivable created order would be incommensurable with this goodness inasmuch as it can never exhaust its infinite perfection. The possibility of solving the latter part of our problem is bound up actually with this very incommensurability between the infinite perfection of the divine goodness and the finitude of any created order contrived by God. Whether God can act outside the order of His providence is thus seen to resolve itself into two cognate questions: whether God can act freely, and whether in this free activity the divine will and the

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divine intellect can extend beyond what was actually decreed by the divine will. The former question has been answered in the affirmative. The latter question must now be attended to.

The mode of divine activity has been described as rational, in so far as the divine will was said to be determined by the divine intellect in the production of its effects. But the divine intellect, which is one with the divine essence, embraces all things, possible or real, as flowing from this essence by way of likeness.<sup>124</sup> It follows, therefore, that no degree of finite (or comparative) perfection actually enjoined by the divine will can exhaust the fullness of the divine essence, nor, consequently, can it set any limits to the boundlessness of the creative insight of the Almighty.<sup>125</sup> God can act outside the order of His providence owing to the disproportionateness of the created order to His infinite goodness and knowledge, without violating thereby the rational unity of His providence or transgressing against the precepts of His sovereign goodness.

'But would not this account of the matter,' the critic might object, 'jeopardize the universality and the certainty of divine providence?' The created order is said to depend exclusively on the self-determined will of the Almighty which is said to be the 'sufficient reason' of the created order. 'Yet would not this amount to relinquishing the results of our foregoing analysis and reducing the created order to the status of sheer contingency?' To resolve this difficulty we have only to recall the exact character of immanent necessity which was ascribed to this order, from the standpoint of divine wisdom and the divine will.<sup>126</sup> Considered in itself, the created order is causally determined—in the manner we have outlined above: the inferior in it depending upon the superior and the superior determined by the laws intrinsic to it. Once this order has been brought forth into being it forthwith becomes subject to this pattern of determination. But for it to be brought into being, in the first place, a primordial condition must be fulfilled: the decree of the divine will. This divine will, as we have seen, is determined merely by the immutable precepts of God's wisdom. On this account nothing can be effected by the

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divine will which has not been foreseen by the divine intellect since all eternity. In this respect, therefore, the Almighty Himself is incapable of effecting anything outside the order of His eternally decreed providence. And yet inasmuch as His power and His fore-ordination are not limited to any determinate order of creation, God *can* legitimately be said to be able to initiate a causal series which represents a positive departure from the normally assigned course of events in nature, and this is what is signified by miracle.<sup>127</sup>

To specify the manner in which this comes about, we must consider, once more, the particular effect in its relation to its proximate cause, on the one hand, and to the ultimate cause, on the other. It must be avowed that normally an effect comes about through the agency of the proximate cause, which actualizes its virtual potentialities. But the efficacy through which this proximate cause actualizes its effect depends itself ultimately on the agency of the Universal Cause.<sup>128</sup> Proximate agents stand to this Cause as intermediaries or subordinates, who simply execute His sovereign orders. Yet there is nothing to prevent this Universal Cause from intervening directly in the course of natural events and producing a certain effect in accordance with His good pleasure, dispensing thus with the agency of His subordinates, in order thereby to manifest His power or advance His sovereign designs.<sup>129</sup>

If it is objected that this extraordinary intervention in the normal course of events threatens the integrity of God's providence and the immutability of His ways, it would be retorted that miracle itself, as a positive departure from the normal course of events, is contained in the order of God's eternal providence; since nothing escapes His eternal fore-knowledge and fore-ordination or happens contrary thereto.<sup>130</sup> Within the eternal framework of that providence there is as much room for the miraculous and the extraordinary as for the ordinary and the natural, but never *without* it, since outside it there is absolutely nothing. If it is further objected, on the other hand, that God's freely ordained departure from the normal course of events in

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nature would impair the unity and the integrity of the natural order, it would be retorted that such a contention rests upon a misconception of the natural. We can describe as unnatural that which happens without reason altogether, or contrary to its norm or principle. But that a patient be acted upon by the First Agent and be thereby brought forth from the state of potentiality to the state of actuality—without the action of the proximate agent, involves no contradiction and violates no genuine rational principle.<sup>131</sup> God's disposition of certain natural agents directly and immediately can be likened to the disposition by human agent of an instrument which he has devised for a given purpose. Secondary agents, being the instruments of God, might be moved by Him freely without violence either to their proper function or their proper nature.<sup>132</sup> If it is contended that this departure infringes the norm or principle of the agent's natural mode of operation, it could be retorted that the First Norm or Measure of all things is God. Whatever norm or principle is implanted in things by Him is natural to them. It is to the extent an agent operates in conformity with this norm that its operation is said to be natural. If it were, however, made to operate otherwise by reason of a novel 'principle or norm' imparted to it by God, its operation would be natural in precisely the same sense. Thus God might choose to effect certain alterations in His workmanship, like an artist who retouches his work, without thereby impairing its nature;<sup>133</sup> because whatever He does is done in accordance with the counsel of His wisdom which is the Measure of all natural things and the ultimate principle of their rationality.<sup>134</sup>

Thus the rational possibility of miracle is ultimately grounded in the spontaneity of the divine will which represents the First Cause of secondary agents and in the incommensurability of divine goodness with any determinate order of created being. God can work, outside the order of nature, in a manner exceeding the powers of natural agents,<sup>135</sup> because these agents derive from Him the specific powers and the specific properties with which they are endowed. If He should decree that these agents should operate in an extraordinary manner so that His grand providential

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designs may be advanced, then He clearly can, without violating either the laws of His sovereign wisdom or those of the creature's own nature.

### CHAPTER FOUR

<sup>1</sup> This manner of speech, as well as the notion of outward manifestation of the divine will, can be justified from a Thomist standpoint. Aquinas holds that power, although it posits a real relation in the creature, is not distinct from God's action (*S. cont. Gent.*, II, 8; *De. Pot.*, qu. 3, art. 3—Resp.) which is one with His essence. Power must be conceived as a positive relation in the creature, which posits merely a relation 'of reason' to God (*ibid.*, 10, 13, 14; *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 45, art. 3—ad. 1) but leaves them totally unaffected in reality. Aquinas is wrestling with a genuine difficulty: creation as a temporal event threatens to introduce change in God or add something to His perfection (In *Sent.*, II, dist. 1, qu. 1f.). In knowing and volition we are dealing with immanent acts, which remain within the agent. But creation, although immanent in a real sense, posits something extrinsic (viz. the creature) to God's will. This difficulty is solved in *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 14, a. 8, by urging that it is God's knowledge and will which are the cause of things, both being immanent acts of the divine essence. Creation implies thus no exteriority, except with regard to the creature; and here it signifies the mode of relation of the creature to God, as its First Principles (*S. Theol.*, I, qu. 45, a. 3). With regard to God, creation is not exteriority since God knows and wills things in the unity of His eternal knowledge and foreordination, rather than under the aspect of temporality (*ibid.*, qu. 14, a. 5 and 7; qu. 19, a. 2).

That in creation there is an 'outgoing' of God is clear from Aquinas' teaching that God is unto things the cause of being, in His capacity as Unique First Being (*S. cont. Gent.*, II, 15; *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 44, a. 1). This teaching needs not be interpreted pantheistically, since the Thomist conception of the analogy of being and the absolute transcendence of God safeguarded the irreducible distinction between the Creator and the creature. The creature, however, participates in the divine being (*S. Theol.*, Ib) while remaining distinct from it; thus it is other than God. This otherness, considered from the standpoint of God, is meaningless, as we have seen. But it must be a positive otherness, if we are to avoid the pantheistic predicament and retain the irreducible distinction between the Creator and the creature. Inasmuch as it cannot be an otherness of being, or of spatiality or contiguity, or of temporality (since God cannot be included in the same category of time as the creature), this relationship of otherness would have to be conceived as one of transcendence or infinitude. If the causal conception is clearer than these two conceptions, then this otherness could be described as the otherness of cause and effect, the common term in which is that of dependence. So that all that creationism asserts would be the dictum that an order of being, existing under the conditions of spatiality and temporality, depends upon an Absolute Being, who is exempt of these conditions,

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and that this dependence is an absolute dependence (*De Pot.*, qu. 3, a. 3, Resp.). How the absolute, eternal, Principle of things can bring forth that order of temporal being, in and through the inward movement of His essence, is of course a mystery.

<sup>2</sup> The term Loquentes refers to the Mutakallimun, whose teachings are expounded in Pt. I, Chs. 73–5, of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, through which they became known to the thirteenth-century scholastics. Chapter 71 relates briefly the origins of Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite schools in their controversy with the (Aristotelian) philosophers, especially over the question of creation *ex nihilo*. In the Hebrew translation of the *Guide* (Moreh Nebukhim) the Mutakallims are called Medebberim, which was rendered into Latin as Loquentes. Mention of these Loquentes (or Loquentes in lege Maurorum—or—in lege Saracenorum; lit.: disputants in the law of the Moors or the Saracens) occurs in Chs. 65, 69 and 97 of the Third Book of the *Summa contra Gentiles* of Aquinas and in *De Potentia*, qu. 3, art. 7; *De Verit.*, qu. 5, a. 9—ad. 4.

Their teaching is criticized also in *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 45, a. 8; qu. 8, a. 1; qu. 115, a. 1; in *Sent.* II., dist. 1, qu. 1, a. 4—cf. Schmolders, *Essai*, p. 138, and Gilson, 'Pourquoi St. Thomas à critiqué St. Augustin,' in *Arch. d'Hist. doct. et litt. au moyen âge* I (1926–27), pp. 10 and 15. A number of contemporary writers have made casual references to the Thomist critique of the occasionalism of the Loquentes in question, e.g., Gilson, op. cit.; M. Asín Palacios in *Algazel, Dogmatica Moral, Ascetica*, p. 787, and *Mélanges Mandonnet*, Tome II, pp. 60–4; S. De Beaurecueil in *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale*, Tome XLVI, 1947, pp. 220–2; J. de Finance, in *Etre et Agir dans la Phil. de St. Thomas*, p. 154. The author rightly remarks that the term Mutakallims or Loquentes, although it refers to all schools of Muslim speculative theology, denotes especially the Ash'arite school which represents the 'extreme right' of Muslim orthodoxy.

Mention must also be made of Réan's discussion of the motives of the Mutakallims in the formulation of their occasionalist metaphysics, in *Averroës et L'avèr*, Paris, 1866, pp. 106–7.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Mandonnet, *Siger de Brabant*, on negation of providence by Averroists, Pt. I, pp. 160 ff. and pp. 136 ff. Mandonnet's summary of the tract *De Necessitate et Contingentia Causarum*, generally attributed to Siger, can be read with interest, cf. pp. 165 ff. The text of the tract is found in Pt. II, pp. 111–28. Props. 59, 58, 28, 5, etc., are directed against this negation of providence.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Summa Theol.*, I, qu. 22, *Cont. Gent.*, III, Chs. 64–77, 94–100, *De Potentia*, qu. 3, art. 7 and qu. 5, etc.

Mandonnet explains (op. cit., p. 161) how the position of Aquinas represents a reaction to the creative determinism maintained in the tract mentioned above. Whereas the author of this tract, Averroës, and the neo-Platonists describe creation as a mode of necessary emanation of the universe from God, Aquinas insists that God created the universe through an act of His will rather than through a necessity of His nature—cf. *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 14, art. 8; qu. 19, art. 4; *Cont. Gent.*, II, Ch. 23. The neo-Platonic doctrine of emanation (as taught by Avicenna and Algazel) is expounded and criticized in *De Potentia*, qu. 3, art. 4, pp. 151–3.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Cont. Gent.*, III, 64 and 93, 94, and *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 22, art. 2, where

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Aquinas singles out Democritus and the Epicurians as negators of providence. Aristotle and Averroës are cited as restricting the sway of providence to incorruptible things only. Cf. also *De Pot.*, qu. 6, art. 1; In *Sent.*, I, dist. 39, qu. 2, a. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 22, art. 2; *Cont. Gent.*, III, 76.

<sup>7</sup> *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 22, art. 4; *Cont. Gent.*, III, 73.

<sup>8</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, III, 71. On evil, contingency, liberty, fortune and chance—as falling within the order of divine providence, cf. the four consecutive chapters, 71–4.

<sup>9</sup> Aquinas writes, *Cont. Gent.*, III, 70:

'Nor is it superfluous, if God can produce all natural effects by Himself, that they should be produced by certain other causes; because this is not owing to the insufficiency of His power, but to the immensity of His goodness, wherefore it was His will to communicate His likeness to things not only in the point of their being but also in the point of their being causes of other things.'

Note this second key passage in *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 22, 3:

'For He governs things inferior by superior, not because of any defect in His power, but by reason of the abundance of His goodness; so that the dignity of causality is imparted even to creatures.'

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Cont. Gent.*, III, 65. As we have stated before this charge applies to the Loquentes (Mutakkilim) in general. But it is the Ash'arites, in the first place, who are aimed at. Aquinas writes: 'Hereby is refuted the position of certain Moslem Theologians (loquentium in lege Maurorum positio) who in order to be able to maintain that the world needs to be preserved by God, held that all forms are accidents and that no accident lasts for two instants, so that things would always be in a process of formation; as though a thing did not need an active cause except while in the process of being made.'

A casual reference to the same error is found in *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 8, a. 1: 'Hunc autem effectum causat Deus in rebus, non solum quando primo esse incipient, sed quandiu in esse conservatur.'—Resp.

<sup>11</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, III, 69.

<sup>12</sup> In the first paragraph of *Cont. Gent.*, III, 69, Aquinas speaks of the 'error of those who thought that no creature has an active part in the production of natural effects,' without specifying the exponents of this thesis. The commentary of Ferrare, however, sends to Averroës, *In Met.*, XII, text 18, et IX, text 7, and states explicitly that the 'Saracens' are here in question. This is confirmed by *De Potentia*, qu. 3, a. 7, Resp. Further on in both works, Aquinas criticizes Avicenra's teaching on the passivity of corporeal substances, owing to their remoteness from the First Cause, their quantitative mass and the absence of an inferior patient upon which they can act—as set forth in *Fons Vitae*, tract ii, 9, p. 40 seq.; tract iii, 44, p. 177; 45, p. 179—Monast. 1895: cf. Leonine edition, *Opera Omnia*, Vol. 14, p. 202; cf. also *De Ver.*, qu. 5, art. 9, ad. 4; *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 115, art. 1—vs. Avicenra; in *Sent.*, II, dist. 1, qu. 1, art. 4, Sol.

The impossibility of transitive operations, owing to the fact that all 'natural forms are accidents' and that accidents cannot pass from one object to the other is explicitly referred to the 'loquentes in lege Maurorum'—as reported by 'Rabbi Moyses'—and to this is conjoined the error that all production is creation.

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'Forms and accidents cannot be made out of matter, since matter is not a part of them. Hence if they be made they must be made out of nothing and this is to be created.' *Cont. Gent.*, III, 69, p. 166.

The teaching of Avicenna, according to which 'substantial forms' emanate from the Active Intellect (or dator Formarum) as we have seen, *supra* p. 80; whereas 'accidental forms,' being mere dispositions of matter, result from the action of lower (*sc.* natural) agents—is cited with partial approbation as avoiding the error of the Platonists according to whom the Ideas are the causes of the being of particular objects of sense, in so far as they participate in them. Cf. also *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 45, a. 8; qu. 115, a. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Aquinas was certainly familiar with the casual references of Averroës to Ash'arite teaching in his commentaries, especially in the *Metaphysics* and the *Physics*. The commentary of Ferrare on the *Summa contra Gentiles*, published in the margin of the Leonine edition of Aquinas's works, sends to *Met.*, XII, text 18 and IX, com. 7—in connection with the 'error of those who attribute all operations to God,' at the opening paragraph of Ch. 69, Bk. III (cf. *In Met.*, IX, Ch. 4, p. 109a; XII, Ch. 3, p. 143a). Also cf. Averroës references to 'Loquentes nostrae legis' in *Physics* over the question of volitional activity in God, Bk. VIII, 159b. On their teachings that accidents do not endure for one instant, *ibid.*, 190b, etc.

<sup>14</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, III, 69, p. 168.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 170, 171–2.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Cont. Gent.*, I, Chs. 86, 87, 88; II, 24.

<sup>17</sup> The distinction between what I called 'bad' and 'happy' necessity is borrowed from the Thomist, Scholastic notion of 'violent' and 'natural' action: the former being action contrary to the nature of the agent; the latter being action coinciding with this nature. Aquinas calls these the 'necessity of violence' and the 'necessity of natural order,' cf., e.g., *Cont. Gent.*, II, Ch. 30, p. 60.

<sup>18</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, III, 70.

<sup>19</sup> *Supra*, pp. 85 and 98.

<sup>20</sup> It is a tenet of Thomism that Being and True are convertible notions. Cf. *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 16, a. 3; *De Verit.*, qu. 1, a. 1, and qu. 21, a. 1. In *S. Theol.*, *ibid.*, Aquinas puts the matter thus: 'Verum autem quod est in rebus, convertitur cum ente secundum substantiam. Sed verum quod est in intellectu, convertitur cum ente, ut manifestativum cum manifestato—ad. I.' This relationship of intelligible manifestation is described further in these terms: 'Et est simile sicut si comparemus intelligible ad ens. Non enim potest intelligi ens, quin ens sit intelligibile; sed tamen potest intelligi ens, ita quod non intelligatur eius intelligibilitas'—ad. 3. Cf. *De Causis*, I, 6, where Aquinas writes: 'Actualitas rei est quasi lumen ejus,' p. 228. Here he is interpreting the Aristotelian dictum that knowability is commensurate with the actuality of the object; as in *Met.*, IX, c. 10, p. 105b 25 f.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. on this question: J. de Finance, *Etre et agir dans la Phil. de St. Thomas*, pp. 63 ff.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Rep.*, Bk. VI, p. 396, tr. by Jowett, Oxford, 1875:

'In like manner the good may be said to be not only the author of knowledge

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in all things, but of their being and essence, and yet the good is not essence, but far exceeds essence in dignity and power.'

<sup>23</sup> *Tim.*, p. 28.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>25</sup> Aquinas accepts this Platonic thesis that God's goodness and love are the first principle of creation. He attributes this thesis to Augustine. 'For the divine goodness,' he writes, 'precedes as the end and first motive of creation, according to Augustine who says: "Because God is good we exist" (*De doct. Christ.*, i, 32).' *Cont. Gent.*, II, 28–9. In *ibid.*, I, 75, he argues that God wills other things in the act of willing Himself. He concludes the chapter as follows: 'This is confirmed by the authority of Holy Writ: for it is written (*Wis.* XI, 25): "For thou lovest all things that are and hatest none of the things which thou hast made." ' The multiplicity of things is explained, in the same passage, as the outcome of God's desire to communicate His likeness to things. Cf. also *ibid.*, I, 29.

In I, 91, he alludes to Aristotle's statement in *Met.*, I, IV, 1, concerning Parmenides and Hesiod who taught that Love was the First Principle of things, which he corroborates with the authority of Dionysius. 'Certain philosophers also taught that God's love is the principle of things; in agreement with which is the saying of Dionysius (*Div. Nom.* IV) that God's "Love did not allow Him to be unproductive." '

<sup>26</sup> *Ennéades*, tr. Brehier, Paris 1925, Vol. III, pp. 167–8.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>28</sup> The *Liber de Causis* consists of 32 propositions embodying the substance of neo-Platonic emanationism, and is an Arabic recension of Proclus's *Elements of Theology*. The latter was translated into Latin by William of Moerbeke, at the instance of Aquinas: cf. Mandonnet, *Siger*, I, p. 138; Hautéau, *de la Philosophie Scolastique*, Tome 1, pp. 384–90; Gilson, *Phil. au Moyen Âge*, p. 378. The Arabic origin of *De Causis*, is alluded to by Aquinas in his commentary on *De Causis*, who notes its relation to Proclus's *Elements*, cf. op. cit., I, lect. i, in *Oposcula*, No. X.

<sup>29</sup> *Elem. Theol.*, Prop. 25. Eng. tr. by T. Taylor, London, 1816, Vol. II, p. 320.

<sup>30</sup> This is the date proposed by Grabman. Mandonnet proposes, 1269–73: cf. Gilson, *Le Thomisme*, p. 533.

<sup>31</sup> The first great commentator of Dionysius was Maximus the Confessor (580–662). Yet it was through Erigena that his neo-Platonic mysticism exercised such decisive influence on the thirteenth century, and especially on the three subsequent centuries. Cf. Gilson, *Phil. au Moyen Âge*, pp. 85 and 201 ff.

<sup>32</sup> Neither the exact name nor the date or birthplace of the Pseudo-Dionysius are known. The first mention of his name occurs in 532 (533) at the Council of Constantinople, where his authority was invoked by Severus, Patriarch of Antioch, in support of Monophysite teachings.

Cf. Rolt, Dion. the Areopagite on *Divine Names*, etc.; *Int.*, pp. 2–3; Gilson, *Phil. au Moyen Âge*, p. 80.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Summa Theol.*, I, qu. 12 and qu. 13; *Cont. Gent.*, I, 29–35. A full account of the Thomist teaching on this question is given in Maritain, *Degrés du Savoir*, Ch. IV, 'On the divine names.'

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. *de Malo*, qu. I. Note the many references to the *Divine Names*. Also *Cont. Gent.*, III, 1–16.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *S. Theol.*, qs. 50–63; *Cont. Gent.*, II, 91 ff., 46–55. Aquinas has written a whole tract on angelology: *De Substantiis Separatis*, of which Chs. 16, 17 and 18 are based on Dionysius, ‘Qui super alios ea quae ad spirituales substantias pertinent, excellentius tradidit,’ Ch. 16, p. 128, *Oposcule*, VII.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Cont. Gent.*, I, 91.

<sup>37</sup> *Divine Names*, Ch. IV, i, p. 87. The analogy of the Good and the sun is derived from Plato, cf. note 22, supra. This analogy is developed further, on pp. 91–3, in Platonic terms. In expounding this passage, Aquinas remarks with a view to warding off the danger of a deterministic emanation of God's goodness through a mode of natural necessity rather than intellect and will, that unlike the sun, God's essence being *intelligere et velle* the diffusion of His essence comes about through intellect and will. *Exp. super de div. nom.*, p. 332, infra.

<sup>38</sup> *Divine Names*, p. 88.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, Ch. V, pp. 136–7 and 140. Dionysius states that being is the first gift of God, ‘the most primary of His gifts,’ p. 136. This being of things is at the same time the source of (1) their permanence, and (2) of their being principles of other things. For it is ‘only through their participation in Existence that they exist and enable things to participate in them,’ p. 137.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36–7.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 100–1.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 113–14. Compare the Thomist doctrine that all things act with a view to a good and that the cause of evil is a good. *Cont. Gent.*, III, 3, 4, 10, 71; *De Malo*, qu. 1, as 1, 2, 3; *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 49, a. 1.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 5, a. 3; *Cont. Gent.*, II, 41; III, 20; *De Verit.*, qu. 21. a. 2.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 5, a. 3 and a. 1. *Cont. Gent.*, I, 37; II, 7. Aquinas writes, in *S. Theol.*: ‘Dicendum quod omnes ens, in quantum est ens, est bonum. Omne enim ens, in quantum est ens, est in actus et quodammodo perfectum, qui omnis actus perfectio quaedam est.’ On the qualification of this position, cf. infra, note 80.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *De Pot.*, qu. 2, a. 1. *Cont. Gent.*, II, 6, 7, 8, etc. On ‘Form’ as the principle of being and operation, cf. *Cont. Gent.*, III, 7, 20.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 5, a. 1. For a discussion of this question, cf. J. de Finance, *Etre et agir dans la Phil. de St. Thomas*, pp. 183–90.

<sup>50</sup> Note in *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 5, a. 2, ad. 1, the finalistic interpretation of the Dionysian notion of the Good which he attempts. Cf. also *ibid.*, article 4, sed contra, where the authority of Aristotle on this question is opposed to Dionysius, etc.

<sup>51</sup> Averroës, in rejecting the emanationist interpretation of Aristotle by Avicenna and al-Farâbî, was therefore perfectly true to the spirit of the Master. He was equally true to this spirit in dismissing the question of the ‘genesis’ of

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things, or their creation out of nothing, as we have seen in Chapter Three, sect. III.

<sup>52</sup> I content myself here with noting the great difficulty to the vindication of creation *ex nihilo* which the Aristotelian distinction between Act and Potency raises. The notion of Act in Aristotle is dictated by the requirements of a dualist metaphysics and has meaning only in contradistinction to Potency. Aristotle is, therefore, perfectly consistent with himself when he carries this dualism to the extreme and sets Act and Potency, God and Matter up against each other, as two co-eternal principles. Creationism, on the other hand, can be rationally vindicated only in terms of a monistic metaphysics in which the initial distinction between Act and Potency does not as much as arise. How the Thomist doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* can be fitted into a metaphysics of Act-Potency is very difficult to see. A deeper reading of Aquinas would show that his doctrine of creation is of neo-Platonic (notably Dionysian) extraction; an emanationist monism whose philosophical scaffolding is Aristotelian, and from which the determinist 'sting' has been artfully removed. In fact, Aquinas speaks of creation as a process of 'emanation' of things from the First Principle in the *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 45.

<sup>53</sup> *Supra*, p. 130.

<sup>54</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, II, 15; *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 44, a. 1.

<sup>55</sup> *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 5, a. 1: 'Sed bonum dicit rationem perfecti, quod est appetibile, et per consequens dicit rationem ultimi.'

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, a. 1 and 2; *De Ver.*, qu. 21, a. 3 and 1-2.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *Cont. Gent.*, III, 17-19.

<sup>58</sup> Aquinas explains, in *Cont. Gent.*, I, that the object of the divine will is the divine essence, which is identical with the divine goodness (I, Ch. 74, II, 22, 28). This God wills of necessity (I, Ch. 80). Inasmuch as His essence is complete in itself, God cannot be said to will things of necessity (Ch. 81). His will of other things is, therefore, an instance of His will of His infinite goodness, inasmuch as other things participate in it (Ch. 75), but only in such wise that these things stand to it in a position of superfluity, since it is complete prior to their creation. Cf. also *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 19, a. 2.

<sup>59</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, III, 21. The character of causality as a perfection superadded to the perfection of being is described thus: 'A thing is perfect in itself before being able to cause another. . . . Hence to be the cause of another thing is a perfection that accrues to a thing last.' Cf. also *S. Theol.*, qu. 115, a. 1.

<sup>60</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, III, 69.

Causality is stated to imply perfection in things in a threefold manner:

(1) First, inasmuch as it manifests the abundance of the creature's perfection.

(2) Second, inasmuch as the good proper to one creature is shared by another and thus diffused unto other things.

(3) Third, inasmuch as causality is a principle of order in the universe, whereby active and passive things are ordered unto each other.

<sup>61</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, I, 8. The argument is clearly directed against Parmenides and the Eleatics. Cf. also I, 9; cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, *God*, etc., Vol. I, p. 194 f.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. *Cont. Gent.*, II, 17, 19; *De. Pot.*, qu. 3, a. 2; *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 45, a. 2—ad. 2; *II, Sent.*, dist. 1, qu. 1, a. 2.

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<sup>63</sup> This distinction is necessary, since the Form is Final Cause, only when conceived as the abstract or ideal perfection towards which an entity strives. In the constituted, concrete entity, the Formal and Final Causes coincide, as the end coincides with the fulfilment of that of which it is the end. Cf. *Met.*, IX, 8, 1050 a-b.

<sup>64</sup> The various forms of motion are reducible, according to Aristotle, to three: quantitative, qualitative and local. *Physics*, V; I, 7. Unqualified becoming or coming-to-be simpliciter is not motion (V, 1, 225a, 25 ff.); the possibility of such becoming, even in the case of substances, is precluded by the fact that every form of becoming presupposes a subject or substratum (I, 7, 190b-). In 190ab, 38, Aristotle leaves open this possibility which he has so readily discounted, by arguing that 'only substances are said to come to be in the unqualified sense.'

In *ibid.*, 8, he explains in what way he is in agreement with the Parmenidian doctrine that Being does not come to be and in what way he is not, which suggests that an absolute genesis of being for him is unthinkable.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. especially *Met.*, IX, 1047a, 30 sq.; 1048b, 28 sq.; 1050a-, 22; on the distinction between 'energy' and 'entelechy.' Cf. also, *De Finance*, *Etre et agir*, pp. 6 ff.

<sup>66</sup> *Met.*, I, 9, 991a. Aristotle writes: 'Above all one might discuss the question what on earth the Forms contribute to sensible things, either to those that are eternally or to those that come into being or cease to be. For they cause neither movement nor change in them.' That Ideas cannot be alleged to be causes of things as Plato claims in *Phaedo* (100 D) is discussed in the same passage.

<sup>67</sup> That God is His own Being, *Cont. Gent.*, I, 22; *S. Theol.*, qu. 3, a. 4. That God is His own Goodness, *Cont. Gent.*, I, 37-8. That God's action is His own essence, *ibid.* II, 8-9.

<sup>68</sup> Op. cit., qu. 2, a. 1. It is very significant that Aquinas discusses the procession of the divine persons and creation in the same context, and reduces them to the same movement of self-communication on the part of God.

<sup>69</sup> Aquinas attributes this dictum to Aristotle (*4 Meteo.*, III, 1). He writes, *Cont. Gent.*, II, 6: 'It is a sign of perfection in things of the lower world that they are able to produce their like, as stated by the Philosopher.' This does not change the fact, we believe, that the doctrine of the self-communication of the Good is in a radical way of Platonic and neo-Platonic origin.

<sup>70</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, II, 6, 7, 15; cf. also *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 19, a. 2.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. *De Ente et Essentia*, Cap. IV, p. 35; In *Sent.*, I, dist. 2, qu. 1, a. 1, ad. 1; and a. 4, ad. 1; *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 3, a. 5.—Resp. Cf. also the discussion of Roland-Gosselin in *De Ente et Essentia*, pp. 185 ff.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *Cont. Gent.*, II, 16; *S. Theol.*, qu. 44, a. 2.

For incommunicability of creative power: *Cont. Gent.*, II, 20-1; *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 45, a. 5; *De Potentia*, qu. 3, a. 4.

<sup>73</sup> *Divine Names*, IV, p. 88.

Speaking of the Angels as the first creatures, Dionysius writes: 'Moreover all things appertaining to the celestial hierarchy, the angelic purifications, the illuminations and the attainments which perfect them in all angelic perfection and come from all-creative and originating goodness, from whence it was given them to possess their created goodness—and to manifest the Secret

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Goodness in themselves and so to be (as it were) the angelic Evangelists of the Divine Silence and to stand forth as shining lights revealing Him that is within the shrine.' Cf. also *ibid.*, I, pp. 53-4 and 56 ff. That creation utters its Cause and Term, who is Nameless, *ibid.*, p. 60 f., pp. 71-2.

<sup>74</sup> In expounding the divine names, Dionysius distinguishes between two categories: undifferentiated and differentiated names; the former applying to the total Godhead, the latter to the three Persons of the Trinity. The former are negative names, since they relate to the Nameless Godhead in His super-Intelligible and super-Essential Being, the latter he describes as 'emanations and manifestations,' since they utter the ineffable secret of the Godhead (cf. *Divine Names*, pp. 69 ff.; also Ch. II in toto). 'The Initiates of our divine tradition,' he writes, 'designate the undifferentiated attributes of the transcendentally ineffable and unknowable permanence as hidden, incommunicable ultimates, but the beneficent differentiations of the supreme Godhead they call Emanations and Manifestations. . . . They say concerning the Divine Unity or Super-Essence, that the undivided Trinity holds in a common unity, without distinction, Its Subsistence beyond being. Its Godhead beyond Deity, Its goodness beyond excellence' (*ibid.*, p. 69).

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Dionysius: *Divine Names*, II, pp. 72 and 78 ff. Also V, p. 137.

<sup>76</sup> *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 2, a. 1 and 2; qu. 13, a. 1 and 5; *Cont. Gent.*, I, 10-12, 30; II, 54; *De Trinit.*, qu. 1, a. 3.

<sup>77</sup> *De Verit.*, qu. 10, a. 12; *De Trinit.*, qu. I, a. 2; *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 12, a. 2; qu. 2, a. 1 and 2.

Aquinas distinguishes between two methods of proof:

(1) *a priori* (una quae est per causam, et dicitur *propter quid*, et haec est priora simpliciter).

(2) *A posteriori* (or: per effectum et dicitur demonstratio *quia*; et haec est per ea quae sunt priora quoad nos), *S. Theol.*, qu. 2, a. 2, Resp. Demonstration through cause, and demonstration through effect do not correspond fully to the Kantian distinction between *a priori* and empirical (or *a posteriori*) procedure. The Kantian distinction refers to the *origin* of knowledge; the Thomist to the nature of the *middle term* employed. The *a posteriori* method is obviously not one 'through the effects'; since for Kant the sensuous data, which represent the 'material content' of knowledge (or manifold of intuition) are designated as 'impressions' or 'sensuous intuitions,' rather than 'effects.' Sensibility is consistently envisaged in the Aesthetics from the standpoint of a 'receptive subject,' never an 'active object'—of which the impressions can be said to be the effects. Needless to say that this is the outcome of the Kantian conception of causality as a 'pure category of the understanding,' rather than an active, intrinsic power in the object.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. P. Garrigou-Lagrange, in *God, His Existence and His Nature*, the refutation of the empirical and idealist objections to the Thomist proofs, Vol. I, pp. 61 ff. and 242 ff.

<sup>79</sup> *De Trinit.*, qu. 1, a. 2, Resp.; cf. on this whole question, Gilson, *Le Thomisme*, pp. 140 ff., and 69 ff.

<sup>80</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, I, 22. 'Existence denotes a kind of actuality: since a thing is said to exist, not through being in potentiality but through being in act.' The

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same principle is enunciated in *ibid.*, II, 53, in the course of proving that in intellectual substances there is no composition of act and potency. Cf. also In *Sent.*, I, dist. 8, 9, 5, a. 2. In *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 3, a. 4, Aquinas argues that '*esse*' is to essence what act is to potency, since '*esse est actualitas omnis formae vel naturae*'—which implies that '*esse*' is a form of actuality superior to Form itself (cf. *Cont. Gent.*, II, 54 for same). This is the main thesis of Gilson (cf. *Le Thomisme*, pp. 43 ff. and 133 ff.). The identification of Being and Act would have to be qualified in two ways: (1) *Esse* is Act *par excellence*—as in the case of God who alone is 'ipsum esse subsistens'; and (2) This '*esse*' transcends even the Form, as a principle of actuality.

The latter qualification is dictated in the Thomist metaphysics by the necessity of determining a unitary principle of being in composite substances, which transcends the Form. This is how Aquinas sets himself in opposition to Averroës with whom the Form was the exclusive principle of being, as we have seen.

Aquinas, at least with respect to his conception of existence as a principle superadded to essence, leans towards the Avicennian position (cf. *De Ente et Essentia*, cap. I and II; and discussion by R. Gosselin, pp. xvi ff., 189 ff. and 157 ff.). Gilson holds (*op. cit.*, pp. 56–60) that the Thomist position is generically different from both the Averroist and Avicennian positions. In his emphasis on the originality of Aquinas's notion of the '*esse*', Gilson tends to overstate his case. Cf. also, *De Potentia*, qu. 7, a. 2, especially ad. 9 m. and the discussion of Gilson in *Le Thomisme*, pp. 50–2.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. *De Pot.*, qu. 3, a. 5. It is noteworthy that Aquinas proves, from the degrees of being, that all things refer to God as 'unum ens, quod est perfectissimum et verissimum ens'; from the dependence of the relative on the absolute 'quod est per alterum est reducitur sicut in causam ad aliud quod est per se'), that God stands to things as 'actus purus, in quo nulla sit compositio'; to which things ought to be referred as the term upon which they all depend, as 'ens quod est ipsum suum esse,' Resp. Here the conception of God as Absolute Being and Absolute Act converge. Also cf. *Comp. Theol.*, I, c. 74; II, *Sent.*, dist. 1, qu. 1, a. 2 sol.

<sup>82</sup> *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 2, a. 3, *quarta via*; *Cont. Gent.*, I, 13; *Comp. Theol.*, I, c. 68; cf. Aristotle, *Met.*, II, 993b 25. In *De Pot.*, qu. 3, a. 5, Resp., Aquinas, despite the fact that he ascribes this argument to Aristotle in two Summas, acknowledges its natural affiliation to Plato's doctrine of participation.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. on this argument, Gilson, *Le Thomisme*, pp. 105–11. Aristotle remarks (*Met.*, II, 993b 30) that the principles of eternal things being most true are causes of the being of other things, since 'as each thing is in respect of being, so is it in respect of truth.' In *Met.*, IV, 3, he argues that there must be a pre-eminent truth which serves as the norm of grades of truth. The Thomist argument rests upon the correspondence between being and truth—which is indisputably of Aristotelian origin (cf. *Met.*, IX, 10; X, 7); and the tendency of things to approximate their First Term, which is of Platonic extraction. Cf. also Carrigou-Lagrange, *God*, Vol. I, pp. 302–45.

<sup>84</sup> *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 48, a. 5: 'Actus autem est duplex: primus et secundus. Actus quidem primus est forma et *integritas rei*; actus autem secundus est *operatio*', Resp. Also *De Pot.*, qu. 1, a. 1, Resp.; In *Sent.*, I, dist. 24, qu. 1, a. 3.

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<sup>85</sup> *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 11, a. 1. ‘Unde manifestum est quod esse cuiuslibet rei consistit in indivisione. Et inde est quod unumquodque, sicut custodit suum esse, ita custodit suam unitatem.’ On the convertibility of being and one, *S. Theol.*, *ibid.*, and a. 2; Gilson, *Le Thomisme*, p. 149.

<sup>86</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, II, 45; *Comp. Theol.*, I, c. 72 and 73; *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 47, a. 1.

<sup>87</sup> Plotinus argues that the One cannot be any of the existing things, because then it could not generate them; nor their totality, since then it would be posterior to them and would thereby cease to be their Principle. He is emphatically opposed to a Pantheistic view which would identify the One with every single thing. For then ‘everything would be identical with everything else. All things would be jumbled up together in confusion and there would be no distinction in things’ (*Enneades*, III, p. 166; cf. also p. 165). On the transcendence of the One, Plotinus writes: ‘Certainly this Principle is nothing, nothing of the things of which It is the principle; neither being, nor substance, nor life can be affirmed of it; because it is superior to all these things’ (*ibid.*, p. 167).

<sup>88</sup> In the commentary on *De Causis* (Lect. vi), Aquinas concedes that the First Cause transcends being inasmuch as it is ‘its own infinite being.’ ‘Causa autem prima secundum Platonicos quidem est supra ens, inquantum essentia bonitatis et unitatis, quae est causa prima, excedit etiam ipsum ens separatum . . . : sed secundum rei veritatem causa prima est supra ens inquantum est ipsum esse infinitum,’ pp. 229–30. This is in substance the position developed in *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 3, a. 3, and *Cont. Gent.*, I, 22; and according to which the ultimate distinction between God and the creature consists in that in God alone essence and existence coincide and exhaust each other. In this manner His existence excels all existing things and He can be said ‘not to exist’ (*ibid.*, qu. 12, a. 1—ad. 3).

<sup>89</sup> *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 13, a. 3; *Cont. Gent.*, I, 29–34. For the doctrine of analogy, see the important monograph of Pénido, *Le rôle de l’analogie en theol. dog.*; Maritain, *Les degrés du savoir*, Ch. IV and annexe II; Gilson, *Le Thomisme*, Ch. V, pp. 140–70.

<sup>90</sup> *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 12, a. 1 and 2; qu. 13, a. 1; *Cont. Gent.*, III, 47, 51–4. It is through this distinction that Aquinas reconciles the apparently conflicting claims of negative and positive theology (cf. *Cont. Gent.*, I, 30). ‘Accordingly in every term employed by us, there is imperfection as regards the mode of signification, and imperfection is unbecoming to God, although the thing signified is becoming to God in some eminent way . . . wherefore, as Dionysius teaches (*Coel. Hier.*, ii, 3), such terms can be either affirmed or denied of God: affirmed, on account of the signification of the term; denied, on account of the mode of signification.’ Cf. also *ibid.*, 14.

<sup>91</sup> *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 13, a. 4; qu. 6, a. 3; *Comp. Theol.*, I, c. 21 and 22.

In *Cont. Gent.*, III, 20, Aquinas writes: ‘Wherefore, since a thing is good so far as it is perfect, God’s being is His perfect goodness; for in God to be, to live, to be wise, to be happy and whatever else is seen to pertain to perfection and goodness are one and the same in God, as though the sum-total of His goodness were God’s very being.’

<sup>92</sup> *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 13, a. 2; *De Pot.*, qu. 7, a. 5; *De Verit.*, qu. 2, a. 2. In the

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latter, Origen and Augustine are referred to as holding the second view. Also, *Cont. Gent.*, I, 31.

It is noteworthy that Aquinas accepts both these aspects of negative theology, as regards the inexpressible mode of divine predicates, in *Cont. Gent.*, I, 30. 'Now the mode of super-eminence in which the aforesaid perfections are found in God, cannot be expressed in terms employed by us, except either by negation, as when we say God is eternal or infinite, or by referring Him to other things, as when we say that He is the first cause or the sovereign good.'

<sup>93</sup> *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 13, a. 6; *De Verit.*, qu. 4, a. 1; *Cont. Gent.*, I, 34.

<sup>94</sup> *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 4, a. 2. This article is permeated with Dionysian influence. The infinity of the divine Being who comprises in His uniqueness all perfections, as well as the self-diffusive causality of His Being, are stated in the exact Dionysian terms we have outlined above. Cf. also *Comp. Theol.*, I, c. 21, 22; *Cont. Gent.*, I, 28; *Sent.*, I, dist. 1, qu. 1, a. 2, 3; In *Sent.*, I, dist. 22, qu. 1, a. 2.

<sup>95</sup> 'At the basis of an analogical concept,' writes Pénido, 'we find a reality (life, goodness, being, etc.) which unfolds itself according to diverse modes, albeit immanent. This immanence is the ground of unity, but this diversity obviates absolute unity.' Pénido quotes here *De Pot.*, qu. 9, a. 2, ad. 6. 'In analogis consideratur non diversa realitates, sed diversi modi essendi eiusdem realitatis.' Cf. *Le rôle de l'analogie*, pp. 53-5.

<sup>96</sup> This too is the motive of Dionysius in affirming being and negating it of God: 'For God is not existent in any ordinary sense, but in a simple and undefinable manner embracing and anticipating all existence in Himself. Hence he is called King of the Ages, because in Him and around Him all being is and subsists, and He neither was, nor will be, nor hath entered the life-process, nor is doing so, nor ever will, or rather He does not even exist, but is the essence of existence in things that exist.'—*Divine Names*, V, p. 135.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. supra.

<sup>98</sup> Aquinas declares, in *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 2, a. 3, his predilection for the First Way, 'Prima autem et manifestior via est, quae sumitur ex parte motus.' But the First and Second Ways are both causal in character. The first proves the existence of a 'cause of movement,' the latter an 'efficient cause.' Gilson notes the affinity between the two ways in *Le Thomisme*, p. 100.

<sup>99</sup> *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 2, a. 3; *Cont. Gent.*, I, 13. Garrigou-Lagrange, op. cit., pp. 289-93; for refutation of empiricism and agnosticism, cf. pp. 84 ff. Cf. also Gilson, *Le Thomisme*, pp. 99-102.

<sup>100</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, III, 69; *Comp. Theol.*, I, 124, 130; *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 22, a. 3.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 45, a. 8; and *De Pot.*, qu. 3, a. 8. On creation as the bestowing of 'being' on the creature: cf. *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 45, a. 2; qu. 44, a. 2; *Cont. Gent.*, II, 15; *Comp. Theol.*, I, 118.

On incommunicability of the creative power, cf. *Cont. Gent.*, II, 21; *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 45, a. 5; *De Pot.*, qu. 3, a. 4; *Comp. Theol.*, I, 120.

In II, *Sent.*, dist., qu. 1, a. 2, Aquinas writes: 'Unde causalitas generantis vel alterantis non sic se extendit ad omne illud quod in re invenitur; sed ad forma, quae de potentia in actum educitur (same position as in *De Pot.*, ibid., Resp.); sed causalitas creatis extendit ad omne id quod est in re; et ide creatio ex nihilo dicitur esse.' (Sol.)

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<sup>102</sup> Cf. *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 3, a. 5; *Cont. Gent.*, I, 25, 24; *De Pot.*, qu. 7, a. 3; *Comp. Theol.*, I, c. 13.

The Aristotelian argument for the non-generic character of being (cf. *Met.*, III, 998b) rests on the perception of the fact that the differentia is not predicable of its genus; so that if being were a genus, the differentia would not be. Every genus is specified by a differentia which is extrinsic to the essence of that genus. But no differentia can be extrinsic to being; since thereby it would not be. Aquinas writes, interpreting this text of Aristotle in *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 3, a. 5: 'Ostendet autem Philosophus in III, *Met.* quod ens non potest esse genus aliquid; omne enim genus habet differentiae qua sunt extra essentiam generis; nulla autem differentia posset invenire quae esset extra ens, quia non ens non posset esse differentia.'

That God is not in a genus, cf. *ibid.* and *De Pot.*, qu. 7, a. 3; cf. *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 6, a. 3; qu. 4, a. 2; *Cont. Gent.*, III, 20; II, 8; I, 38, 45—for God's mode of possessing knowledge, goodness, will, in the one unity of His essence.

<sup>103</sup> The problem is stated in identical terms in Ch. 98 of *Cont. Gent.*, Bk. 3. The title of the Chapter is: 'How it is possible, and how it is impossible, for God to do something outside the order of His providence.' The same formula is restated in *De Pot.*, qu. 6, a. 1.

<sup>104</sup> In *Cont. Gent.*, II, 28–9, Aquinas disproves 'the error of some who strove to prove that God cannot do save what He does, because He cannot do except what He ought to do,' p. 51. In *ibid.*, 30, he shows that 'though all things depend on God's will as their first cause, which is not necessitated in operating except by the supposition of His purpose, nevertheless absolute necessity is not therefore excluded from things, so that we are obliged to assert that all things are contingent,' p. 56.

In *De Pot.*, qu. 6, a. 1, he singles out three errors:

(1) The error of an 'immanent, rational determinism' which precludes the possibility of the intervention of a supernatural cause in the course of natural events, as in Anaxagoras.

(2) The error of emanationist determinism, according to which God's mode of operation is determined by the necessity of acting through the mediacy of the Intelligences; particular causes being inaccessible to Him.

(3) The error of 'creative determinism,' according to which God acts through a necessity of His nature.

<sup>105</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, I, 74; *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 19, a. 3.

<sup>106</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, I, 75, 76, 79.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. *ibid.*; also *ibid.*, II, 12–14; *S. Theol.*, qu. 45, a. 3.

<sup>108</sup> That God does not act of natural necessity, *Cont. Gent.*, II, 23, 26; *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 19, a. 3; *De Pot.*, qu. 1, a. 5; *Comp. Theol.*, I, 97; *I. Sent.*, dist. 43, qu. 2, a. 1; *De Verit.*, qu. 23, a. 4. That God acts according to His wisdom, *Cont. Gent.*, II, 24. That a reason for the divine will can be assigned, *ibid.*, I, 86–7. This is reduced, in *Cont. Gent.*, III, 97, to the divine goodness, as regards God's necessary volition of Himself, and to multiplicity or hierarchization, as regards the multitude of created things (cf. *Comp. Theol.*, I, 101 and 102). On free will in God, cf. *Cont. Gent.*, I, 88; *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 19, a. 10.

<sup>109</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, II, 28–9; *I. Sent.*, dist. 43, qu. 2, a. 2.

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<sup>110</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, II; *ibid.*, pp. 51–2.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51. Aquinas writes: 'Nevertheless although nothing to which anything can be due precedes the universal creation of things, something uncreated precedes it, and this is the principle of creation. This may be considered in two ways. For the divine goodness precedes as the end and first motive of creation. . . . Also, His knowledge and will precede, as by them things are brought into being.'

<sup>112</sup> Aquinas thus concedes a mode of necessity immanent to the divine Being, which can be described as 'the determinism of the divine wisdom,' in its relation to the divine will; cf. *De Verit.*, qu. 23, a. 6, Resp. and ad. 4 m.; *De Pot.*, qu. 1, a. 5, Resp., 'Sic autem. . . .'

That God acts in accordance with His wisdom and knowledge, cf. *Cont. Gent.*, II, 24.

<sup>113</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, II, 28–9.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 83; *De Pot.*, qu. 1, a. 5, Resp.; *De Verit.*, qu. 23, a. 4, ad. 1.

<sup>115</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, I, 83.

<sup>116</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, II, 28–9, p. 54.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, Ch. 30. It is noteworthy that Aquinas considers this a necessity inherent in being. 'From these principles, in so far as they are principles of being,' he writes, 'a threefold absolute necessity is found in things,' p. 58.

<sup>118</sup> Here Aquinas makes his classical distinction between 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' action (cf. also, *Cont. Gent.*, I, 45, 73; *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 14, a. 2 and 4)—action which remains in the agent and action which goes beyond it. In the former case the necessity is immanent in the essence of the agent: in so far as this essence is simple; in the latter it is consequent upon the Form of the agent of necessity, unless this Form is hindered by an external factor. The former, however, is always determined to act once it has been brought into act by its actualizing principle, as in the case of the 'intelligible species' in the act of intellection, unlike the latter which might be hindered through an extraneous factor. The instance which Aquinas adduces in illustrating the latter mode of necessity is that of fire: 'If fire is hot, it is necessary that it have the power to heat, although it is not necessary that it heat, since it may be hindered by something extrinsic.' *Cont. Gent.*, II, 30, p. 60. This is exactly how Averroës solves the difficulty, *Tahâfut*, p. 521.

<sup>119</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, *ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.* On the finalistic determinism of the good, cf. *Cont. Gent.*, II, Ch. 2–10.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. *Cont. Gent.*, III, 71, 72, 94. Aquinas writes against the Loquentes (*ibid.*, Ch. 97) in a passage which sums up his whole teaching on this question: 'It is therefore clear that the dispensations of providence are according to a certain reason, and yet this reason presupposes the divine will. Accordingly a twofold error is refuted by what we have said. First, there is the error of the Moslem theologians in the Law of the Mohammedans, as Rabbi Moses relates (*Guide*, III, 25) according to whom the sole reason why fire heats rather than chills is so because God so wills. Secondly, we refute the error of those who assert that the ordering of causes proceeds from divine providence by way of necessity. Both of which are false,' p. 51.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Ch. 4, supra, note 108.

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<sup>123</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, I, 74.

<sup>124</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, I, 49; *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 14, a. 5; I, *Sent.*, dist. 38, qu. 1, a. 1; *De Verit.*, qu. 2, a. 3. That God knows even the things which are not: *Cont. Gent.*, I, 66; *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 14, a. 9; *De Verit.*, qu. 2, a. 8; I, *Sent.*, dist. 38, qu. 1, a. 4.

That He knows the things which shall be:

*Cont. Gent.*, I, 67; *S. Theol.*, I, qu. 14, a. 13; I, *Sent.*, dist. 38, qu. 1, a. 5; *De Verit.*, qu. 2, a. 12; *Comp. Theol.*, I, c. 133.

<sup>125</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, I, 26, 27.

<sup>126</sup> This is how Aquinas puts it:

'This universal order in respect whereof all things are ordered by divine providence, may be considered in two ways; namely, with regard to *things* subject to that order, and with regard to the *reason* of the order, which depends on the principle of the order,' *Cont. Gent.*, III, 98, p. 53.

<sup>127</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, III, p. 98.

<sup>128</sup> *De Pot.*, qu. 6, a. 1, ad. 1 m., *Cont. Gent.*, III, 100.

<sup>129</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, III, 99. The manifestation of God's power is stated explicitly to be the 'motive' of miracle, p. 57. That intervention in the course of nature by God is designed to advance His providence, cf. *De Pot.*, qu. 6, a. 1, ad. 14, 19, 21.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.; *De Pot.*, qu. 6, a. 1, ad. 6 m. 'Dicendum quod Deus non facit contra rationes naturales mutabili voluntate; non Deus ab aeterno praevidit et voluit se facturum quod in tempore facit. Sic ergo instituit naturae cursum, ut tamen prae-ordinaretur in aeterna sua voluntate quod praeter cursum istum quandoque facturus erat.'

<sup>131</sup> Miracle, being referable to the action of the First Cause, can therefore be God's work alone, although it might be done through the agency of humans.

*Cont. Gent.*, III, 102; in *ibid.*, 103, and *De Pot.*, qu. 6, a. 3, Aquinas criticizes Avicenna's 'naturalistic' account of miracle through the agency of separate substances (*sc.* the dator Formarum alluded to above).

<sup>132</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, III, 100.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., *De Pot.*, qu. 6, a. 1, ad. 19 m.

<sup>134</sup> *Cont. Gent.*, III, 100.

<sup>135</sup> In *De Pot.*, qu. 6, a. 2 ad. 3, Aquinas distinguishes three types of 'miracles,' i.e., deeds exceeding the powers of nature and falling within God's power. Certain miracles are above the powers of nature (e.g. Incarnation); other contrary to nature (e.g. that the Virgin conceived); still others are beside (*praeter*) the powers of nature but not contrary thereto (e.g. the conversion of water into wine, the instantaneous healing of the sick, etc.). In the extraordinary manner of their happening, all these events exceed the powers of nature.

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### CONCLUSION

The analysis of the causal principle which we have attempted in the foregoing pages represents an endeavour to defend the validity of causality against the sceptical claims of theistic occasionalism. The radical error of occasionalism, as we have seen, consists in its failure to perceive the positive significance of causality for any genuine metaphysical or theological world-view. In its endeavour to safeguard the absolute uniqueness and sovereignty of God, occasionalism proceeds to strip the created order of the positive predicates of genuine being, reserving them exclusively to the Almighty. Yet, in the naïveness of its enthusiasm, it fails to perceive that whatever threatens the solidity of the metaphysical substructure upon which it erects the throne of the Almighty, threatens in a similar manner the solidity of that throne itself.

In substantiating this thesis, we were confronted with the question: 'In what sense does a positive conception of causality contribute to the conception of the genuine perfection of the ontological order?' The examination of the causal principle reveals that causality affords us with the clue to determining the precise relationship between the finite and the infinite, between the creature and the Creator. This relationship has been described as one of dependence. But instead of disputing the reality of this dependence of the creature upon the Creator, occasionalism loads it with the character of absoluteness. And that is precisely its ultimate motive in repudiating the reality of the causal principle.

To answer this question, we were led to determine the exact status of causality as a predicate of the ontological order. The determination of this status, it will be recalled, was found to rest on a law of ontological fecundity rooted in the very nature of Being, in its affiliation to the Good. The perfection of the ontological order, we argued, requires that this order should be conceived as dynamic, as pregnant with the virtualities of its own being. An inert, ontological order, however much it might be

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found to 'depend' on its Author, is an order which is deficient in this very quality and, therefore, an order which is lifeless and barren. And it is on account of this barrenness that such an order is in the last analysis unworthy of the perfection and generosity of its Sovereign Author.

The question of the status of causality, as contributing to the perfection of being, was found, however, to be distinct from the question of the positive validity of causality as a genuine category of the ontological order. The former question was concerned with the 'why' of causality: i.e. with its metaphysical justification as a genuine concept, from the standpoint of the perfection of the created order and the sovereignty of its Author. The latter question, on the other hand, was concerned with the 'how' of causality: its status as a principle among other metaphysical principles. To determine this status of causality, we had to seek the roots of causality in being. Being, we argued, utters itself out in dynamic activity, by virtue of its munificent character whereby it communicates its substantial perfection, on the one hand, and by virtue of its inner luminosity whereby it reveals its nature, on the other. Were it not for this self-revelation, being would remain hidden and mysterious. The clue to this twofold self-revelatory character of being was discovered, it will be recalled, in the Dionysian conception of Being as Good and in the Aristotelian conception of Being as Act. These two conceptions, as we have seen, had to be integrated into a synthetic conception of being in its relation to causality—a task successfully achieved by Aquinas.

The sceptical presuppositions of theistic occasionalism had thus to be rejected on grounds inhering in the nature of being, on the one hand, and on grounds inhering in the nature of knowledge, as the self-revelation of being, on the other. The strength of the occasionalist case consisted in its apparent success in emptying the ontological order of any causal content, and confining causality to the unique relationship between the universe and its First Cause. Yet the latter aspect of its solution of the causal problem was found to conflict with the former, so that the

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validity of causality, as a predicate of the order of being, had to be restored through the extension of the allegedly unique relationship between the Creator and the creature to the whole ontological order, by pronouncing it a category of being *qua* being. In this endeavour two genuine difficulties had to be met: the validity of the allegedly necessary relationship between being and causality, and the legitimacy of the inclusion of the Creator and the creature in the same causal category. The latter of these two difficulties was resolved, from the standpoint of Thomism, through the analogical conception of being and causality—a conception which found the clue to the legitimacy of predicating being and causality of the finite and the infinite in a law of ‘ontological kinship’ between them, which did not affect at the same time the ‘order of eminence’ in which the latter stood to the former and the radical discrepancy between them. The former difficulty was resolved in terms of a metaphysics of being whose foremost ontological predicate was that of dynamic energy.

As a predicate of the ontological order, causality was thus found to represent a positive sign of the perfection of being, conceived as vital and dynamic. But there was another respect in which causality was found to represent an indirect sign of this perfection in the logical order itself. Causality, it was shown, is not only a *quality* of being; it is likewise a *nexus* between conditions or entities, hypothetical or real. The occasionalist metaphysics of contingent being, as we have seen, destroys at one stroke the character of causality both as a positive ontological quality and a necessary logical nexus. This was how al-Ghazālī refused to concede the validity of the category of necessity outside the order of abstract logical relations. Having emptied the order of being of any inner dynamism, he was inescapably committed to an epistemology in which real entities could only be represented in unrelated isolation. It followed, on his argument, that no transition from one order of reality (the order of effects) to another order (the order of causes) was possible. Such a transition was possible only in the realm of abstract concepts.

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The error of al-Ghazālī in this procedure consisted, as we have seen, in his failure to perceive that the very validity of necessary logical relations, in the order of thought, rests on the validity of these relations, in the order of being, to which the former must correspond if they are to remain genuine relations. These logical relations are ultimately grounded, as Maimonides shrewdly perceived, in the generic structure of the real, rather than in the representations of the imagination. And it is on the former that the human intellect feeds, as it were, rather than the latter.

A causally-related order of being bespeaks the perfection of being, inasmuch as it conceives of the members of this order as bound up by a law of ontological kinship. It is, of course, difficult to grasp how a universe of truly unrelated entities can be imagined to exist, since every entity in such a universe would constitute a world of its own with its own laws and its own processes. The continuity of cosmic life would become altogether unthinkable on this hypothesis; as indeed the concurrence of any series of cosmic conditions and things would stand in jealous aloofness one from the other. Although occasionalism concedes the validity of a series of necessary logical relations—to which there must correspond a parallel series of real ontological relations in which the former are rooted, it nevertheless repudiates the reality and necessity of the causal nexus. Yet the causal nexus, whether its necessity is conceded or not, is the only positive relation in which the ‘jealous aloofness’ of things can be surmounted, inasmuch as real entities are said to go beyond themselves, to issue out of themselves, as it were, only in this mode of dynamic communication of self. And here we find ourselves at our initial starting-point: causality is ultimately ground in the self-diffusive character of being.

There remains one final question to settle. Causality has been vindicated as a concept whose roots lie in the metaphysical sphere. The repudiation of causality by scepticism, as in the case of Hume, is bound up, however, with the repudiation of the possibility of metaphysical knowledge. The necessity of the causal nexus, as an *a priori* category, is rejected on the grounds

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that no positive *a priori* categories can apply to the empirical realm, even if such are said to exist. Although it is beyond the scope of the present discussion, it can be shown that the Kantian retort to Hume cannot be accepted as final. For Kant refuses to concede the metaphysical validity of causality, notwithstanding his admission of its validity as a transcendental, *a priori* concept, which like all transcendental concepts can apply to the empirical realm without forfeiting its *a priori* extraction. The metaphysical validity of causality, however, cannot be surrendered for two major reasons: First, the significance of causality as a clue to the existence of God is bound up with its validity as a metaphysical concept. Kant surrenders the causal concept in the demonstration of the existence of God in the *Fourth Antimony of Pure Reason* on precisely this score: that causality is valid only as a transcendental concept. Second, a complete refutation of scepticism is impossible, except in the perspective of a positive vindication of the possibility of metaphysics as a science, in which the causal principle must play a decisive role. In this respect the endeavour of Kant to disprove the sceptical presuppositions of Hume amounts to meeting Humean scepticism half-way. The positive validation of metaphysics as a science, of course, is beyond the scope of the present essay. That is why it did not figure in the foregoing discussion, save to a minor extent. Nor did the theological starting-point of our problem make the treatment of this question imperative. For theistic occasionalism, despite its sceptical assumptions, presupposes tacitly the validity of its own metaphysical procedure in positing God as the First Principle of things. And however false its conception of the nature of metaphysical knowledge, the critical question of the validity and scope of metaphysics is not an issue which criticism need join with occasionalism.

With this the thread of the argument can be relinquished. The limited scope of our initial problem having been compassed we can leave the latter problem with no further effort to settle it. Scepticism, we believe, can only be silenced once this is successfully and completely achieved. But the present essay was not designed

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as a complete and final refutation of scepticism. Any positive success achieved in our foregoing endeavour to validate the causal principle, it is true, would naturally weaken the sceptical position. Yet the task of silencing scepticism conclusively is the perennial task of all positive philosophy.

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